

BOVARD OF THE *POST-DISPATCH*

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BOVARD

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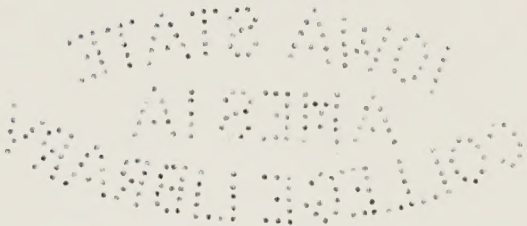
POST-DISPATCH

by James W. Markham

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To
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Acknowledgments

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In addition to this copyrighted material, the author was fortunate in having been granted permission to use the Pulitzer Papers deposited in the Library of Congress and the Columbia University library by the present publisher of the *Post-Dispatch*, Joseph Pulitzer. Mr. Pulitzer likewise granted permission to use a reproduction of the Wayman Adams portrait of himself which was presented to him by the employees of the *Post-Dispatch* on his sixtieth birthday.

To each of the firms and individuals listed the author expresses his gratitude.

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Introduction

WHEN OLIVER KIRBY BOVARD, the last of Joseph Pulitzer's great editors, retired after forty years of crusading, he had earned a special niche in American journalism. His position was not the result of the nebulous kind of fame that comes from temporary prominence with its outward, and often empty, trappings. It was based on a more enduring value—the respect and admiration of his fellows, for whom even today, nine years after his death, he still lives as a symbol of the highest ideals and traditions of his craft. Like many other editors who preside anonymously, day after day, over the flow of news to millions, Bovard was not well known to the public. But among the writing and editing craft from coast to coast he was regarded with veneration as a “newspaperman's newspaperman,” and “the greatest managing editor.” It would have been hard to find a newspaper office in the country where tales were not told, fabulous or literal, of his remarkable accomplishments. Because of his surprising personality, Bovard provoked countless anecdotes even before he retired. These, one hastens to add, circulated by word of mouth, for their protagonist never permitted a line about himself to appear in print unless the circumstances were beyond his control or knowledge. This attitude toward publicity, a curious lack of ostentation, a habit of keep-

ing aloof from outside organizations and influences, and a withdrawal from participation in public affairs—a field to which he devoted his entire professional career—added just the necessary degree of mystery and paradox to surround his name with a legendary aura. To this should be added a dash of the magic Pulitzer tradition, plus the distinction of being for a long time one of the highest salaried managing editors in the country. Out of such things was Bovard's reputation fashioned.

Bovard's rise was meteoric. Going to the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* from an obscure reporting position with the St. Louis *Star*, he advanced to the city editorship in only two years. His aggressive leadership soon made the *Post-Dispatch* first in local news and prepared the way for his appointment as managing editor eight years later, following a short period of training and testing on the New York *World* under "J. P.," himself. During his next twenty-eight years as the chief news executive of the *Post-Dispatch* Bovard translated into action his ambitious, comprehensive concept of the news function and brought the paper its first recognition as a journal of national influence. Through his efforts, the *Post-Dispatch*, which its founder had always restricted to regional matters, attained some of the stature Pulitzer's other newspaper, the *World*, had reached earlier in the century. Since the late 1920's critics have considered it one of the three or four outstanding American dailies.

The story of Joseph Pulitzer has been a source of inspiration for a generation of newspapermen, and through the years it has become a classic of journalistic achievement. A Hungarian of good family and education, Pulitzer came to America as a youth of seventeen

and enlisted in the Union army during the final year of the Civil War. The end of fighting found him impoverished and jobless in an alien land whose language he had only partially mastered. He managed to hitchhike his way west to St. Louis where he found friends among its German society and work as a reporter for the German-language *Westliche Post*, owned by Carl Schurz and Emil Preetorius.

Young Pulitzer's alertness, intelligence, and extraordinary capacity for hard work made him successful as a newspaper reporter. By a stroke of circumstance these qualities also launched him upon a brief political career. Nominated as a joke for the Missouri legislature on a Republican ticket in a Democratic district, he won the election by vigorous campaigning. In the legislature he got his reform bill passed, and his fight against corrupt elements attracted considerable attention. During the next few years Pulitzer profited—first, by buying and selling a share of the *Westliche Post*, and then by buying a small German-language daily and selling its Associated Press franchise to the St. Louis *Globe*.

In December, 1878, Pulitzer bought the disintegrating *Dispatch* at a sheriff's sale at which he was the only bidder. Its machinery was worn out and its circulation inconsequential. For years it had been published in a perfunctory manner, chiefly to prevent the lapsing of its Associated Press franchise, which was indeed its only asset. Three days later he merged it with the *Post* of John A. Dillon, who a year later sold his half of the combination to his aggressive partner.

In a prospectus of December 13, 1878, the young publisher announced his objectives. He asserted that the

Post and Dispatch would serve no party but the people, would follow no causes but its conclusions, and would not support the administration but criticize it. Furthermore, the platform pledged the paper to oppose all frauds and shams, to advocate principles and ideas rather than prejudices and partisanship, and to print all the news as accurately as thorough investigation could make it.

To convert such ideals into reality, Pulitzer and John A. Cockerill, his managing editor, used lively and sensational treatment, showed unusual enterprise in news coverage, and crusaded vigorously for progress and reform. Shortly after its opening day the paper leveled its editorial guns at the widespread practice of tax evasion, naming names, though many belonged to prominent and wealthy persons; then, it pitched into police-protected gambling and lottery rings in a fight that extended over three years. Among the other achievements of its first two decades, the *Post-Dispatch* exposed the harsh treatment of recruits at Jefferson Barracks; campaigned for the reform of the St. Louis public school system, for the Louisiana Purchase centennial exposition, for sanitation and street improvement, and for aid to disabled firemen. It raised funds for a list of worthy causes, including the education of firemen's orphans and for relief of victims of Mississippi floods, the St. Louis tornado of 1896, and the Galveston hurricane of 1900. It raised money for the defense of Charles Stewart Parnell, Irish Home Rule party leader involved in the Phoenix Park murders. Funds totaling \$39,215.79 subscribed through *Post-Dispatch* efforts were used to provide em-

ployment on public works in Forest Park for twenty thousand unemployed workmen.

Post-Dispatch readers soon learned that those who sought wealth and power by dishonest means or at public expense could expect no mercy in its columns. They saw deceptions exposed, sensibilities and sentiments tenderly treated, creeds and nationalities respected, and unfortunates readily assisted. At that time, in St. Louis these were new lines of newspaper conduct, although they were, in one way or another, in the tradition of Horace Greeley, Samuel Bowles, Henry J. Raymond, and James Gordon Bennett. Thus Pulitzer demonstrated his belief that, in order to fulfill its public trust in a free society, a newspaper must do more than merely publish the news. He accepted the challenge to create a journal that would be a positive force for community leadership.

The paper soon established itself as St. Louis' leading afternoon daily. The first 987 copies of the *Post-Dispatch* had been delivered to subscribers in a creaking wheelbarrow, but by 1887, the year in which the Sunday *Post-Dispatch* was launched, circulation figures had reached almost 27,000. By 1904, it had grown to 117,943—the largest west of the Mississippi. An immediate success, the *Post-Dispatch* was earning a profit of \$45,000.00 a year within its first four years.

Repercussions following the killing by Cockerill of an attorney whom the *Post-Dispatch* had attacked caused Pulitzer to leave St. Louis in 1883. Almost immediately thereafter he bought the *World* in New York, and from there directed the affairs of his St. Louis newspaper through managers. The first of these were D. W.

Woods, business manager; Florence D. White, managing editor; and Samuel Williams, editor.

Generally the paper continued to prosper. Once when it suffered a minor reverse, Pulitzer sold Colonel Charles H. Jones one-sixth interest and sent him to St. Louis to correct the situation. Jones, an able newspaper executive, made sweeping changes in policy and personnel, but soon improved the paper's position. However, he committed it to the support of Bryan in the 1896 campaign, a course which his partner strongly disapproved, and it was only after considerable difficulty that Pulitzer finally succeeded in regaining control. Under new Pulitzer management, F. D. White was made general manager, dividing his time between St. Louis and New York, and George S. Johns, editor.

Pulitzer sent his second son and namesake, Joseph, Jr., to St. Louis in 1906 as an apprentice under Johns and Bovard, then city editor. Upon the death of his father, Joseph, Jr., became editor and publisher. By this time Bovard was managing editor; Johns, still editor of the editorial page; B. E. Bradley, general manager; and W. C. Steigers, business manager. While the younger Pulitzer held the reins, he relied heavily on these able executives.

Although the sensationalism that had characterized the first two decades of the paper's history was purposely toned down after the turn of the century, its crusading fervor was not diminished. In St. Louis, in East St. Louis, in Missouri and in southern Illinois, the *Post-Dispatch* waged battle after battle.

It was during and after World War I that the newspaper, through Bovard's influence, first began to look

beyond regional boundaries for news exploits. The early years of the 'twenties saw the paper forging a place in national and world affairs. There followed a succession of national crusades, the most important of which were directed at the Teapot Dome oil scandals, the unseating of a federal judge for official malfeasance, the release of federal political prisoners, and justice for Sacco and Vanzetti. Before 1930 *Post-Dispatch* reporters had earned their first two Pulitzer prizes, and the paper was widely recognized for its efforts. It was about this time that Senator George W. Norris first used the phrase, "the Manchester Guardian of America," in reference to the Midwestern daily.

The 1930's and the 1940's brought their procession of achievements. Among them were the solution of the Kelley kidnaping and the Muench baby hoax; the crusade against padded vote registrations; the Union Electric bribery fund revelation; the investigation of fire insurance rate arrangements, which contributed to the conviction of Boss Thomas J. Pendergast for failure to pay income tax on the bribe he received; the economic analyses of the causes of the great depression; the successful campaign to rid the city of smoke; disclosures of laxity which caused the Centralia mine disaster; exposure of the names of newspapermen on the Illinois state payroll; and the 1952 disclosures of corruption in the Bureau of Internal Revenue. In all, the *Post-Dispatch* and its men have won eleven Pulitzer medals. Adherence to its platform of never being satisfied, which Joseph Pulitzer II has said "simply means printing an honest newspaper," has distinguished the *Post-Dispatch* as America's foremost crusading newspaper.

The years have brought their inevitable changes. On the editorial side Johns has been replaced in turn by Clark McAdams, Charles G. Ross, Ralph Coghlan, and the present editor, Irving Dilliard. Bovard resigned in 1938 and was succeeded first by Benjamin Reese and then by Raymond Crowley, both former city editors with long *Post-Dispatch* records. Joseph Pulitzer II has guided the course of the paper through depression, wars, and the socio-economic changes which the seventy-fifth anniversary number of December 13, 1953, called "The Second American Revolution." Joseph Pulitzer III, vice president and associate editor, and Joseph Pulitzer IV, now four years of age, may be expected to keep the *Post-Dispatch* in the family and in the founder's tradition for a long time to come.

Only once since its first triumph has the paper's circulation dropped to second place in the city. In 1919, the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, usually just slightly behind, spurted ahead after its absorption of the St. Louis *Republic* and kept its lead until 1935, when the *Post-Dispatch* regained it. In 1951 the *Post-Dispatch* bought the *Star-Times*, its last competitor in the evening field, and in 1953 the circulation stood at 391,890.

The genius of Joseph Pulitzer I endowed the *Post-Dispatch*; Joseph Pulitzer II nurtured, adapted, and developed his father's principles. Better than any other man in his generation on the paper, however, O. K. Bovard understood and converted into reality the spirit of Pulitzer journalism.

Had it been Bovard's prerogative to decide whether his biography should be written, it never would have seen the light of day. Because of a characteristically un-

prepossessing attitude toward himself, it simply would not have occurred to him that anyone could be interested in a story of his life. But it has been a fascinating task to analyze the man, to go behind that imposing reputation, to seek to know the real person behind what Charles G. Ross described as a "remote, Olympian figure." In so far as this attempt has succeeded, the task has been worthwhile.

One of the purposes of this volume has been to portray the story of the editor's life and character so that others might know him, so that his influence and his personal integrity in the practice of his profession might have significance for the future. Another aim has been to increase understanding of the journalistic techniques successfully practiced in the management of a metropolitan newspaper. Of particular interest are the strategy and generalship Bovard found useful in directing a newspaper crusade, and the methods of leadership this skilled executive practiced in building and keeping a talented staff. A third purpose has been to explore a hitherto neglected subject, the course of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* since the death of its founder. Previous emphasis by historians seems to have been placed upon Pulitzer's *New York World*. The facts presented here show that under the leadership of the second Joseph Pulitzer and of Bovard the *Post-Dispatch* in the twentieth century became a worthy heir to the Pulitzer heritage.

The writer acknowledges his great indebtedness to Dr. Frank Luther Mott, dean emeritus of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and a scholar and historian whose wise and kindly counsel from the begin-

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JAMES W. MARKHAM

The Pennsylvania State University

January, 1954

Beginnings

CITY EDITOR WETMORE's jaw relaxed. Then he vigorously chewed a cigar as his eyes moved rapidly over the final sentences. He glanced up at the young reporter.

"What makes you think the *Post-Dispatch* would be interested in this story? It's obviously not true or your own newspaper would have accepted it."

The other's manner was quiet and self-assured. "The whole town's talking about the Central Traction grab and how it was put through the Assembly by bribery," he said. "Most people believe it. You've been implying bribery almost every day in the *Post-Dispatch*. Every city editor in town knows the rumor, and I think you have been trying to break it."

The reporter was Oliver Kirby Bovard of the St. Louis *Star*, rival afternoon daily. He had learned one night in 1898 the story behind the Central Traction Company's bribery of the city assembly for a profitable street railway franchise. He had the factual details—the identity of the "pay-off" man, the amounts paid, where, and to whom. He had the facts which explained the dramatic scene when the council passed the franchise bill—an action which those who were present had not been able to understand. Bovard had written his story, a simple narrative without proof, and had submitted it to the

Star which had promptly rejected it. Bovard then took his story to Pulitzer's crusading *Post-Dispatch*.¹

"Was the *Star* afraid to touch this thing?" Wetmore demanded.

"They didn't want it for political reasons," Bovard explained. The *Star*'s owner, Nathan Frank, was running it as a partisan political organ devoted to advancing the interests of the Republican party (which held a majority in the assembly) and of Frank's own political aspirations.

"We'll take your story. What do you want for it?"

"You can have it if you'll give me a job on the *Post-Dispatch*," Bovard said quickly. "I want to give the *Star* a week's notice. While you are privileged to investigate the truth of the story at once, I want to make it a part of the agreement that you are not to publish it until my time is up on the *Star* and until I have joined the *Post-Dispatch*."

Wetmore accepted Bovard's terms, but he broke his promise and sprang the story within a day or two. Although the account on its face was convincing, he had not taken the time to verify it.² Interviewing most of the accused assemblymen had, of course, failed to substantiate the facts. Perhaps Wetmore was afraid that the *Star* might print the story after all, or that some other St. Louis paper might uncover it. But he did keep his word to hire the *Star*'s energetic police reporter, and Oliver Kirby Bovard joined the *Post-Dispatch* staff.³

¹ O. K. Bovard, "The Exposure by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch of the Central Traction Franchise Boodle Scandal in April, 1898," undated MS., *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library. ² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* Bovard's own account says he offered his story to City Editor Claude Wetmore, who apparently had just been appointed to fill the position vacated by

In breaking the story of the Central Traction scandal, young Bovard had exposed an outcropping which indicated extensive subsurface corruption. At the heart of it was a system of machine politics ruled by Boss Edward Butler. City officials and their masters had fat franchises to grant, and business interests, standing to profit enormously, were eager to pay for favors. The system which operated for their mutual benefit was in part an outgrowth of the rapid urbanization of the area with the accompanying need for transportation facilities, streets, sewers, and lights.

Its strategic position as a gateway to the West had made St. Louis a manufacturing, commercial, and retail trade center. After the Civil War it expanded so rapidly that it soon ranked in size as America's third city. But Chicago grew faster, gaining new importance as a rail center, and by the middle 1870's had regained its former rank. But the city at the confluence of the Missouri and the Mississippi, St. Louis, forced into fourth place, kept expanding at a dizzy pace. By the late 1890's its boundaries, burgeoning westward fanlike from the river, encompassed the homes of almost a half-million persons. The West End was mushrooming as a new residential area of fine homes. Forest Park, containing more than fourteen hundred acres, was a source of civic pride. The Eads Bridge, a great boon to growth, was not enough; to the north a new span was creeping across the river.

The city's teeming thousands had outdated its transportation system. Mostly operated by independent

Charles E. Chapin. George S. Johns, an important news executive on the paper, may have employed Bovard, however. See O. G. Villard, *The Disappearing Daily* (New York, 1944), 124.

owners, the service suffered from lack of uniformity. It became apparent that anyone able to establish a monopoly by means of an exclusive city franchise would reap rich rewards. The situation was tempting, and soon opportunists appeared, all eager to take advantage of it. The North and South bill, introduced in the assembly in 1897, was promptly exposed by the *Post-Dispatch*. A forerunner of the ignominious Central Traction bill which brought Bovard to the *Post-Dispatch* a year later, this bill was in effect a feeler to sound out newly elected assembly members. The so-called "franchise-grabbers" introduced it to see what inducements were needed to influence the assembly. As far as the *Post-Dispatch* could determine, lobbying was conducted without buying votes. The milder enticements of champagne suppers and cigars were offered. Such "jollyng" did not satisfy the material tastes of the assemblymen, so the bill failed. More tangible inducements were clearly indicated.⁴

Accordingly, when the Central Traction bill came up the following year, its promoters realized fully the necessity for stronger measures. Robert M. Snyder, a Kansas City promoter, came to St. Louis to represent the newly formed traction company seeking the franchise of consolidation. Instead of approaching the assembly combines through Boss Butler, Snyder met them and cultivated their good will at his Planter's Hotel headquarters.⁵ Meanwhile, the established St. Louis Traction Company fought to preserve its status.

⁴ *Post-Dispatch*, April 18, 1898.

⁵ Louis George Geiger, *Joseph W. Folk of Missouri*, in *University of Missouri Studies*, XXV (Columbia, 1953), No. 2, p. 33.

Dealing through the Boss, it was already paying certain councilmen annual sums.

The proposed bill would grant to the Central Traction Company exclusive rights over all street railways within the city limits and those in such additions as the city might develop during the life of the franchise, a fifty-year period. In return the company was to pay \$1,000,000.00 with payments distributed over the same fifty years.

As a result of Snyder's operations the measure passed both houses of the bicameral assembly with ease, but Mayor Henry Ziegenhein's veto halted it. Delegates then met in caucus to muster the required two-thirds majority to make the bill law over the mayor's veto. One member whose name was known to the *Post-Dispatch* brought to the caucus fifteen one-thousand-dollar bills.⁶ A few minutes later in official session the house of delegates announced the majority. The same thing occurred in the council, but here the vote was so close that either Councilman Uthoff or President Meier had to cast the one needed ballot. Meier declined, leaving it up to Uthoff, who readily furnished his vote in behalf of the proposal. Thus it became law. Afterwards, before the Central Traction Company had paid anything to the city or made the slightest effort to improve the service, Snyder sold the coveted franchise to the St. Louis Traction Company for \$1,250,000.00 and left town.⁷

Bovard's story exposing the wholesale bribery broke on April 18, 1898, three days after the assembly vote. It began:

⁶ *Post-Dispatch*, April 18, 1898.

⁷ Geiger, *Folk*, 33.

The new City Hall was dedicated to the boodling franchise grabbers Tuesday night.

That iniquitous railway grab, the Central Traction Bill, duplicate of the infamous old North and South Sweeney Octopus, has become law.

Councilman Frederick G. Uthoff did it.

His was the pivotal vote by which the city council overrode the mayor's veto Tuesday night and made certain of the ordinance becoming law.⁸

Before the lead paragraph, bold-faced type proclaimed "The Ignoble Roster"—names of every member who had voted for the ordinance. "The Roll of Honor" revealed those who had refused to bargain away the city's future for personal gain. Bovard explained to his readers the meaning of this action by the city's governing body. A franchise worth millions of dollars had been given away by the servants of the people literally in the face of public protest, he wrote. He reiterated Mayor Ziegenhein's view that the city was tying the hands of posterity by granting at one time all undisposed railway franchises instead of making arrangements from time to time as the needs might justify.

The startling exposé brought the town to its feet. Other St. Louis papers were giving space to the rumors and to the facts of the vote, but this was the surface news. Behind such news lay hidden facts which readers wanted to know. Who were the bribers? Who accepted the bribes? What, in essence, did the assembly actually give away? Bovard's subsequent stories answered these questions, and the *Post-Dispatch* had the courage to print them. Yet, to circulate such damaging accusations

⁸ *Post-Dispatch*, April 13, 1898. News of the impending war with Spain crowded this story to page 6.

against respected citizens required more daring than possession of the facts warranted. Both civil and criminal libel lurked in the charges.

Persistence, a mark of Pulitzer journalism, characterized the activities of the *Post-Dispatch* and Bovard's reporting during the next few days. The scandal received full play. New facts were dug out and brought to light. City Editor Claude Wetmore directed the investigation.⁹

On April 15 the paper estimated that the franchise was worth at least five million dollars. Three days later the *Post-Dispatch* called upon a grand jury to investigate. "The odor of municipal rascality smells to high heaven," it snorted. Within a week Judge Zachritz directed the grand jury either to indict the wrong-doers for the crime of bribery or to indict the *Post-Dispatch* for criminal libel.¹⁰ It should have been painfully obvious by this time that, had the charges been untrue, numerous civil libel suits would have been filed. But no such actions were brought. The grand jury duly deliberated but brought no true bills against anyone.

What had happened? Doubt was cast upon the legal propriety of the diction chosen by the judge in his instructions. "A Lawyer" writing in the letters column of the next day's paper argued that the language used was that of a petit jury charge and therefore not proper for a grand jury. Indeed, the nature of the instructions from the bench might have made a significant difference in the nature of the jury's return. Judge Zachritz told the jury it must be satisfied beyond a reasonable

⁹ Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery* (St. Louis, 1904), 3.

¹⁰ *Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 1898.

doubt of the guilt of the individual before it could indict. On the contrary, the letter argued, he should have told that body that it should return a true bill if it had a reasonable doubt as to the innocence of the persons. The writer called this incorrect statement of the law an overturn of the jury system. Bovard himself said that the bribe-takers would have been indicted had the prosecuting attorney and the judge done their duty. Wetmore commented, "We had sufficient proof to convince any fair-minded jury that at least a score of persons had committed a felony and should be sent to the penitentiary. . . ." Three years later when another grand jury, sitting at the behest of Joseph W. Folk, brought out the truth, the complicity of Judge Zachritz and his prosecutor in this incident was established, and the two found their political careers closed.¹¹

What keen disappointment young Bovard must have felt! What a jolt to his sense of justice to see those guilty of treachery to a public trust go free! Yet the experience, while disillusioning, was nevertheless a lesson in public morals.

Bovard and the *Post-Dispatch* were not fully vindicated until 1902. Joseph W. Folk's investigation of new city hall scandals brought to light evidence which proved the 1898 briberies. However, it was then too late to prosecute most of the guilty ones because the time allowed by the statute of limitations had expired.

Although his crusade against the boodlers died for want of prosecution, Oliver Bovard had used it to realize his ambition—a reporting position on the Pulitzer daily. Such a desire he shared with many other news-

¹¹ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 6.

men, for the *Post-Dispatch* was making history with its record of devotion to the public welfare and its fearlessness in attacking wrong. The precepts of Pulitzer's "New Journalism," which Bovard learned from his father, who was then serving the paper as its telegraph editor, held a strong appeal for him. Moreover, the sensational Central Traction affair, besides resulting in Bovard's first connection with the newspaper he was to serve for forty years, struck a note curiously symbolical of his career. The theme was exposure of corruption in high places; in the story of Bovard's life this theme was to become a refrain.

The earliest Bovards of record were Huguenots who fled France during the persecutions and settled in Northern Ireland. The American branch of the family seems to have started with two brothers, James and John Bovard, who migrated from Ireland some time before 1783, the year in which James was known to have had property assessed for taxation. They settled at Hannastown, Pennsylvania. The sons and grandsons of James, from whom Oliver Kirby Bovard descended, apparently moved westward, for Oliver Kirby's grandfather, Oliver K. Bovard, probably a great-grandson of James, was an academy teacher of East Liverpool, Ohio.

Here, on March 4, 1842, a son, Charles Wyrick, was born to the teacher and his wife, Mehitable Herron Bovard. The boy learned the printer's trade as a youth. When the Civil War broke out, he left his type case to enlist as a private in the Twenty-third Ohio Regiment.

After the war, C. W. Bovard found work as a compositor on a Springfield, Illinois, newspaper, and it was in Springfield that he married Hester Bunn on April 20, 1870. The printer moved his growing family from one Illinois town to another. At Jacksonville, the Bovards' second child and first son, Oliver Kirby, was born on May 27, 1872. From Jacksonville the Bovards moved to Chenoa, thence to El Paso, and finally back to Springfield. In 1880 the Bovards were in St. Louis where the father worked as a printer at the *Planter's and Stockman's Farm Journal*. In 1882 he was employed as a printer on the *Globe-Democrat*, and for the following year, as a telegraph editor. For the most part during these years, he remained devoted to his trade, eventually going to the *Post-Dispatch* as a printer in the late 'eighties. In 1891 he gave up typesetting to become telegraph editor of the Pulitzer paper. He held that position or one designated as "news editor" until his retirement in 1904. Like some other loyal Pulitzer men, however, he did go over to the *Chronicle* for about a year when the paper was under the direction of Colonel Charles H. Jones.

C. W. Bovard's ability as a newsman earned him the respect and affection of his associates. He seems to have been alert, untiring, and reliable. Because of his discriminating judgment he was considered a safe mentor, a man often sought for his advice and, according to Florence D. White, the "best news editor in St. Louis." When he decided to retire to his farm at Coulterville, Illinois, the paper tried in vain to dissuade him.

The family's early ramblings ceased when the father



BOVARD'S FATHER AND MOTHER, Charles Wyrick Bovard, printer and telegraph editor of the *Post-Dispatch*, and Hester Bunn Bovard, of Springfield, Illinois. (Photos copied from tintype in possession of Mrs. May Bovard Brokaw.)

found steady employment in St. Louis. In 1884 they bought a two-story frame house at 2044 Gano Avenue in a North St. Louis German community. Here Oliver, his brother, Charles Herron, and his three sisters, Anna Blanche, Mary Ethel (or May), and Ruth Hester grew up. The children soon became accustomed to the old German culture and to the language commonly spoken in the neighborhood. Bovard's ability to imitate the Bremen Avenue dialect gave him amusement in light moments of later years. Dwight Perrin, many years later Bovard's assistant managing editor, had been a boy in the same community; and the two men at work in the *Post-Dispatch* newsroom frequently lapsed into the familiar dialect of their childhood days.¹²

Oliver Bovard in his middle teens was a tall, good-looking youth with regular features and frank, gray-blue eyes reflecting a rare Irish wit. He was fond of sports, particularly rowing, skating, swimming, and tennis.

His first name, "Oliver," it seems, had been an honorable name in the Bovard clan. According to an old family legend the first Oliver Bovard had been named for Oliver Cromwell. Later Oliver Bovards had picked up the middle initial "K." Oliver and "K." soon became associated in the family nomenclature and the two customarily came to be handed down together. Therefore, when a son was born to Charles Wyrick and Hester Bunn Bovard the name Oliver K. was bestowed upon him—the "K." for Kirby, a Civil War messmate

¹² Principal genealogical sources are family records in the possession of Mrs. Oliver K. Bovard and Mrs. May Bovard Brokaw; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1949), XXV, 44; Bovard's brief autobiographical essay dated August, 1938, on file in *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

of his father's. As a youth Bovard found himself unable to share his family's traditional enthusiasm for the time-honored name, and substituted the nickname "Jack" for "Oliver" whenever he possibly could.

"O. K. Bovard's formal education ended with grammar school. He passed the entrance examinations for high school at the age of fourteen but was unable to go to high school." Thus Bovard simply and impersonally described the extent of his schooling. Why his formal education was thus interrupted he did not say. Whatever the cause, it was not unusual for boys to leave school for jobs after finishing the eighth grade, and young Bovard did not discontinue his already formed reading habits. On his bookshelf rested the volumes of the classics, Dickens and Scott.

The year after he left school Oliver Bovard with two of his friends, George Hermann and Arthur Bersch, decided to leave home. They engaged a skiff at the River Boat Club and floated down the Mississippi as far as Cairo. Their money soon gave out, however, and with it their desire for adventure and independence. Arthur and George wired their parents for help and went home, but Oliver Bovard was too proud to admit defeat. He chose to take a job cleaning lamps and doing chores at a hotel until he had earned enough money for his fare home.

Once here the youth soon found work as a clerk in the office of Curtis and Company, manufacturers of sawmill supplies and machinery. During the next few years he held several similar clerkships with other firms. His employer in 1889 was the Rio Chemical Company,

and in 1891 he worked in the *Post-Dispatch* business office.¹³

In 1892 Bovard left the *Post-Dispatch* business office to take a position as bookkeeper with the *Globe-Democrat*. His work on the *Globe* was unimportant, but it apparently brought him into closer contact with daily journalism in St. Louis than had his duties at the *Post-Dispatch*. This association made an important impact on the direction of his life, but, curiously, no account of Bovard's career mentions his three years in the business office of the *Globe*. He himself omitted the fact from his autobiographical narrative; yet his period of service with the *Globe* was well known and was recorded in *Gould's St. Louis Directory*, 1893-96.

The *Globe-Democrat* in the 'nineties had the largest city and sectional circulation.¹⁴ Its editor, Joseph B. McCullagh, had built it to regional, and perhaps national, prominence, first by successful crusades against the Whisky Ring, and later by emphasis on telegraph news which brought it much of its regional readership in the Southwest. A morning newspaper of Republican sympathies, the *Globe* was a strong voice in party affairs. From the standpoint of the excellence of its news and editorials, it was considered a good, solid journal. Its great rival in the morning field was the patriarchal *Republic*, a Democratic party daily.

Names that were to become well-known in the fields of journalism and literature had appeared on the *Globe's* staff roster from time to time—W. C. Brann, Eugene Field, William Marion Reedy, and Theodore

¹³ *Gould's St. Louis Directory*, 1888-93.

¹⁴ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York, 1950), 432.

Dreiser. Over them all had ruled McCullagh, his doughty personality saturating the atmosphere of the office. Those who worked there could not escape its effect. Dreiser, in *A Book About Myself*,¹⁵ recalled that McCullagh grew steadily in his estimation as he read the "powerful, brilliant editorials, and saw how systematically and forcefully" the great editor "managed all things in connection with himself and his men." "Little Mac," as Eugene Field called him, was a real force in the city. His influence upon Bovard was significant, notwithstanding the fact that the latter's work afforded him few, if any, meetings with the great man. Young Bovard's role appears to have been that of envious on-looker. The Dublin-born bachelor-editor was "married" to the *Globe*, and he lived it day and night.

Among Bovard's acquaintances at the *Globe* was Harry B. Martin, later known as the creator of the *Post-Dispatch* Weather Bird, who had come from the Vincennes, Indiana, *Commercial* to work as artist and baseball editor. Their friendship grew, and before long "Jack" Bovard was sitting in the press box with Harry Martin.

Another *Globe* man whom Bovard knew was James M. "Red" Galvin, who sported loud, overstylish suits, rings with oversize settings, large freckles, and a shock of red hair. People usually assumed that Galvin was Irish, but he was a Russian Jew. Though he was a somewhat repulsive character to Theodore Dreiser's fine sensibilities, he had a man-of-the-world air that both Bovard and Dreiser admired. As a reporter, "Red" Galvin wrote little. He specialized in tips, in leg work, and

¹⁵ Theodore Dreiser, *A Book About Myself* (New York, 1922), 101-102.

in gathering information. Much of his time was spent at race tracks, gambling resorts, and the habitations of the petty politicians and the corruptors of the city government. Association with a man like Galvin schooled Bovard in the ways of men and crime. Moreover Galvin taught him what was news and how to get it.

Bovard abruptly terminated his employment with the *Globe* some time in the fall of 1895.¹⁶ It was the noon hour, and the bookkeeping room was almost deserted. Bovard was one of the first to return from lunch. As he entered, he was smoking a cigar. One of the "bosses" saw him and called his attention to the rule against smoking. Bovard, not unmindful of the rule, supposed it applied only to hours on duty. The noon hour was not yet over; so he kept on smoking. The order then came: "Quit smoking at once or leave." Standing at the side of his high desk, with arms akimbo, face flushed, and eyes looking straight at his superior, the young bookkeeper took a long, deep breath as if it might be his last. Then he asked in a low voice, "May we breathe?" Without waiting to be fired officially, Bovard put on his coat, left the office, and did not return even for a part of his week's salary.

Bovard was through with keeping accounts. He wanted to be a newspaperman, and he saw no opportunity to get into the editorial department of the *Globe*.

¹⁶ W. A. Kelsoe, *St. Louis Reference Record* (St. Louis, n. d.), 300.

Getting Into Journalism

SOME TIME BEFORE "Jack" Bovard's abrupt departure from the business office of the *Globe-Democrat*, he and Harry Martin had become absorbed in the fascinating sport of bicycling with thousands of other young men and women. About this time the bicycle craze was sweeping the country, and St. Louis was not immune. Widely accepted as a new means of transportation for city dwellers, it became at the same time a popular recreational and athletic activity for the younger set. It was the incentive for riding parties and scenic excursions, and a new motif to courtship. Young women of fashion took up the fad. Wealthy persons patronized cycling contests, placing bets on the cycle champions as on the horses. This vast popular interest in the sport and Bovard's enthusiasm for it provided him the opportunity to break into newswriting.

He bought a copper-rimmed Rambler and joined a bicycle club. He took part in the races and endurance contests, once bicycling from St. Louis to Mexico City in an attempt to set a distance handicap record. These accomplishments eventually won him a wide acquaintance, and made him a well-known figure in the rapidly growing circle of "wheel" men and women and his name a familiar one to readers of the sporting news.

In response to intensive reader interest, bicycle jour-

nalism flourished. Occasional columns of cycling items blossomed into full blown weekly or semiweekly pages. The newspapers sought devotees of the sport to serve as bicycle editors.¹ In the spring of 1896 the St. Louis *Star*,² a crusading, sensational afternoon and Sunday paper similar to its more successful competitor, the *Post-Dispatch*, happened to be looking for someone to handle its expanding bicycle news. Jack Bovard was offered the job—his first in journalism. Having already severed his connection with the *Globe-Democrat*, he joined the *Star* as bicycle editor and general reporter.

The first Bovard-edited pages appeared in the Sunday *Star* of April 5, 1896, about the time the spring cycling season opened. An editorial announcement promised readers the "Only Exclusive Women's Bicycle Page on Earth" each Sunday. Wheelwomen were invited to use the page for exchanging experiences. The news consisted of columns of personals under the heading, "On the Road." Another weekly feature, "What to Wear," presented in pictures and text the newest sporting hosiery, clothing, and equipment. On the opposite page, the regular sports section gave space to men's bicycle news and items from other cities of America and Europe. By April 18 Willie Green's sporting column claimed the Sunday *Star* would eclipse all competitors. In May the paper was running three "great" bicycle pages.

The event of the season was the Annual Bicycle Races, which in 1895 attracted five thousand spectators. Long heralded in the papers, the 1896 races

¹ Everett W. Pattison, *A Run Down the Cycle Path, A History of Cycling in St. Louis* (St. Louis, 1897), 53.

² O. K. Bovard, autobiographical essay.

planned for Sunday, June 21, were given a great build-up in Bovard's column. By four o'clock, he wrote, the lawns would be crowded with people out to see the big race that had caused

more talk and occupied more space in the newspapers than any previous cycling event. The grandstands at the mile track will present a scene of life and color equal to the one brought out by the National Derby yesterday. Bicycle races always work the spectator up to a high pitch of enthusiasm, and this one will not be an exception. Everybody in the city has heard of the race, and all have formed an opinion on the result, or at least taken sides . . . and will shout and cheer their favorites as they pass.³

The race was run by ten men riding abreast past the grandstand and making eleven laps around the one-mile course. The winning club was to receive \$200.00 in goods donated by merchants plus 75 per cent of admission receipts. The losers received the remaining 25 per cent, but had to pay the winners \$200.00 in cash. Unfortunately, showers fell on that Sunday afternoon, somewhat dampening the ardor of the occasion and cutting in half the expected crowd.

In time the bicycle editor of the *Star* ceased to be content with merely chronicling news and comment from the world of cycling. He wanted to encourage the development of the sport, and he became one of its promoters. True, he had been promoting its development in the pages of the paper by giving its activities space. But now he turned his energy and the journalistic channels at his command toward more tangible results. He used his column, "Cycling Gossip," as a means of advancing his proposals and conducting campaigns. The *Star* offered a "handsome bicycle cup" to the victorious

³ St. Louis *Star*, June 21, 1896.

winner of the Forest Park Races, the first of a score of such awards offered by the paper at Bovard's instigation. Good roads for local cyclists was the next target at which he aimed his editorial guns. On May 24 he set forth his plan for graveling Skinker Road the distance of about one mile to complete a circuit of seven miles of improved cycling courses within the city limits. This improvement would also relieve congestion along the park drives, he observed, urging immediate action by the city. The city did act, and the success of this endeavor inspired Bovard to advance larger schemes. During August and September, 1896, his bicycle pages advocated a "Star Cinder Path," which would connect Forest Park along Kingshighway to Tower Grove Park. As a result of Bovard's needling, a subscription drive soon raised the \$1,200.00. The Street Commissioner approved the scheme and promised that the cinders would be laid by the first of November. "It will open up North St. Louis to South St. Louisans and will give North St. Louis riders access to the beautiful roads in and about Tower Grove Park," the *Star* exulted. "This means at least fifty miles of as beautiful cycling as can be found anywhere in the country."⁴ The *Cycling Gazette* commended the *Star* for its enterprise, and Bovard modestly quoted the praise but reminded his readers that similar improvements were being developed in other cities, as the bicycle journals amply testified. The following year a second project, a cinder path from the Baden Waterworks Station to the Chain of Rocks, was completed as a result of Bovard's editorial efforts.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*, October 4, 1896.

⁵ See *ibid.*, August 1–October 12, 1897.

Oliver Bovard's two-year stint on the *Star* came to a close in April, 1898, when he offered to the *Post-Dispatch* his exclusive story of the Central Traction bribes, the story which the *Star* had declined to print. It was characteristic of Bovard's independence that he found satisfaction in having gained a position on the *Post-Dispatch* entirely on his own merit, and not because of his father's connection with the paper. Earlier he had warned F. D. White, the general manager, that he wanted absolutely no consideration on the latter basis.

Because their standards were high and rigidly maintained, a position on one of the Pulitzer papers, the *Post-Dispatch* in St. Louis or the *World* in New York, was recognized as one of the toughest jobs in journalism. Yet such positions were the most sought after by aspiring newspapermen. To work in the Pulitzer organization was to be tempered in fire. If a man had real ability (or "capacity," as Bovard termed it) this was the kind of experience that brought it out. Pulitzer's ideals demanded competence. Under his system, men and their performance were carefully measured and continually subjected to tests. If one fell short of what was expected, he was fired or shifted. The discipline seemed effective. Those who met the tests were paid well and bonuses for unusual or brilliant work were frequent. Thus Bovard could feel justifiably proud of his achievement.

The Pulitzer formula for conducting a newspaper, even at that early date, was widely known as the "New Journalism." Its principles of independence, courage, and devotion to the public appealed to a young reporter like Bovard. Pulitzer had demonstrated its effectiveness

by transforming two apparently hopeless newspaper wrecks into phenomenal successes.⁶ His "extraordinary achievements in one generation mark the intelligent energy of the man and the effective power of his principles . . . [which] gave journalism a new power and a new meaning." "The new idea" of Pulitzer journalism "was that of public service through publicity."⁷ Men before Pulitzer's time understood the value of publicity as a moral force and the responsibility of the press as a public servant; but Pulitzer's conception of these principles and his application of them as practical factors in everyday journalism were new.

At the basis of the "New Journalism"⁸ was a thorough, searching, and persistent policy which gave new impetus to the gathering and writing of the news. Facts piled upon facts were printed, repeated, and hammered in a way that most readers could comprehend. While emphasis was upon the important and significant, trivial news and popular features were a part of the plan. Sensationalism—news selection and treatment according to its emotional appeal—also characterized the news policy. Accuracy in the news, as in all phases of newspaper production, became a goal.

⁶ Standard biographies are Don C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters* (New York, 1924), and James W. Barrett, *Joseph Pulitzer and His World* (New York, 1941). See also Alleyne Ireland, *An Adventure with a Genius: Recollections of Joseph Pulitzer* (New York, 1920), and O. G. Villard, "Joseph Pulitzer," in *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1933), XV, 260-63.

⁷ Melville E. Stone, in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (25th Anniversary number), December 13, 1903.

⁸ Mott, *American Journalism*, 430-41; Willard G. Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (New York, 1927), 322-53; Charles G. Ross and Carlos Hurd, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (St. Louis, 1949); Walter B. Stevens, "The New Journalism in Missouri," in *Missouri Historical Review*, XVII-XIX (April, 1923-July, 1925).

A second principle found expression in a vigorous, independent, fearless editorial page. Pulitzer's greatest interest was in making the leadership of opinion a living force. He was convinced that to preserve utter independence editorial writers and newswriters, too, should be men of comparatively few personal attachments or outside sympathies. He insisted that the paper serve no party, special interest, or class and that it recognize no authority but the people. It was to be a vigilant guardian of the public welfare. To do anything else would result in betrayal of the people.

To employ both the news and the editorial pages in a persistent crusade for the public benefit was a third objective pursued with the greatest stubbornness. In his campaigns against gambling and tax-dodging during the early years of the *Post-Dispatch*, Pulitzer had discovered what could be achieved in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles by continued effort in a straight line. Twenty-five years later he wrote an editor, "Never drop a big thing until you have gone to the bottom of it. Continuity! Continuity! Continuity! until the subject is really finished." A close liaison between editorial and news departments was mandatory if crusading was to be effective and important news commented upon while it was still fresh. Although the publisher insisted upon this co-operation, he enforced the general policy of complete interdepartmental freedom of the business, editorial, and news departments. Bovard was to see these principles and methods in operation; he was to observe their successful results, not only for the newspaper but also for the community; he was

to adopt such ideas and make them work in his own professional career.

When he joined its staff, Bovard found the *Post-Dispatch* going through a period of transition. It was being reorganized under Pulitzer's active control again after a two-year interval under the management of Colonel Charles Jones. An able man, the colonel had taken advantage of his one-sixth interest and his complete authority to fire most of Pulitzer's trusted executives, to bring in his own personnel, and to effect other changes. Perhaps he felt such measures were necessary to bring the paper out of a decline. But when he editorially espoused the cause of Bryan and free silver, he drew Pulitzer's ire. When Pulitzer finally regained possession by buying back Jones's portion of stock, he promptly sent John A. Dillon, a former partner, to St. Louis to reorganize the staff. Florence D. White, a former managing editor, was made general manager, dividing his duties between the *Post-Dispatch* and the *World*. Harry B. Martin, Bovard's bicycling companion, came from the *Republic* as a staff artist, and other talent was recruited from local papers. Major Albert Lawson, a Jones man, remained for a time as managing editor, but without authority. George S. Johns, restored as editor, was the chief editorial executive in St. Louis, in charge of the news as well as the editorial page.

The city desk was being vacated by the redoubtable Charles E. Chapin, whom Pulitzer was transferring to the *World*. But the stamp of Chapin's personality was still fresh in the *Post-Dispatch* city room. The Chapin imprint was a tradition in St. Louis and a lasting impression on Bovard. Chapin had weathered the tempests

of the Jones regime as a strong man would. Becoming city editor shortly after Jones's arrival,⁹ he ruled the city room like a dictator. He was disliked by reporters because of his hard, cold, impersonal treatment in discharging daily routine, and one of them pictured him as "square of jaw, baleful of eye, chewing a big black cigar or a gob of gum or a bite out of a plump reporter."¹⁰

Dismissal, or the threat of dismissal, was one of Chapin's favorite methods of disciplining his men. He apparently took pride in the number of men he had discharged during his career. He said he had fired hundreds of reporters though the most reliable estimate available gives only 108. It seemed to be a part of Chapin's code that a good reporter was made a better reporter by being discharged from time to time. But he apparently had a soft spot for human weaknesses, for he was said never to have fired a man for drinking or for other personal difficulties; the cause was usually inefficiency or carelessness. Though his methods were tough and often painful for those who worked for him, Chapin got results. Viewed as a machine operating a system, he was possibly the ablest city editor who ever lived.¹¹ There seems little doubt that Bovard patterned his city room conduct closely after Chapin's, when he was called upon two years later to fill the shoes of the latter.

Bovard was assigned to a desk on the third floor of

⁹ Charles E. Chapin, *Charles E. Chapin's Story, written in Sing Sing Prison* (New York, 1920), 164.

¹⁰ Frank A. Behymer, "Simon Legree of the City Desk," in *Page One, 1948* (annual publication of St. Louis Chapter, American Newspaper Guild), 11.

¹¹ Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York, 1934), 6.



ST. LOUIS NEWSPAPER REPORTERS at the Belleville Street Fair about 1898. At left is James M. ("Red") Galvin. Fifth from left in center foreground is O. K. Bovard. In right foreground are Frank A. Behymer and Carlos Hurd. (*Post-Dispatch* photo.)

the five-story structure at 513 Olive Street, but as a reporter he spent considerable time away from the city room. The *Post-Dispatch* building had been constructed on the site of the Provident Savings Bank and remodeled to meet the needs of newspaper publishing. It looked upon the street with large arched windows outlined in roughly hewn granite and shaded by striped awnings. The *Post-Dispatch* had occupied the building April 10, 1888, but only four years later increased circulation necessitated an additional \$100,000.00 worth of presses. To house this new equipment, basements of neighboring buildings were leased and tunnels constructed from the main press room. Among the best-equipped plants in the West, the paper boasted two sets of steam boilers, engines, and presses—the duplicate equipment assuring production in spite of breakdowns.¹²

As a *Post-Dispatch* reporter, Oliver Bovard not only handled general assignments and covered the police courts, but also dabbled in features. Out of some of these feature stories he developed a column written under a nom de plume. The first of the stories appeared in July, just four months after Bovard came to the paper and dealt with the clothes, language, dance, and customs of a young contemporary social set peculiar to North St. Louis. The raggers, whose like seems to have inhabited no other spot on the globe, derived their name from "rag out," meaning to dress well, in the slang of the day. Members of the ragger society included single young men and women from middle class families, who could be distinguished with ease from ordinary mortals

¹² *Post-Dispatch*, April 10, 1888, December 25, 1898.

by several striking characteristics. To qualify as a full-fledged ragger one must intone the ragger's cant, wear his costume, master his dance and swagger, and obey his unwritten laws of etiquette. Moreover, the true ragger must have demonstrated his skill in the manly art of "scrapping."

The language of the ragger appears to have been compounded from the speech of the Bowery and the London Cockney, with a dash of slang—both local and imported. Kid Lavigne, a leading "spirit" of Cass Avenue, speaks in one of Bovard's stories, appearing on page 22 of the August 7, 1898, *Post-Dispatch*: "Say, does dat guy up dere tink he's de main squeeze? Is dat on de dead? Well, he's up in a balloon and de fellows won't do a ting to him. . . . I wanter tip you off on de real ragger. . . . Day sends de loidy up an' she rags aroun' an' by an' by she cops out some guy dat'll stand for a quarter touch. . . ."

The male ragger, like the Celt and Teuton, was a gay-plumaged creature who spent his earnings on clothing. His girl, affectionately called his "pettie," could be beautiful only in "face and form," for she had to "give" her money home, and could not afford to buy bright, fashionable apparel. Her plain blouse, skirt, and sailor straw hat were more than offset by the striking appearance of her man. This Beau Brummell sported suits of loud colors—bright blue or green—a single-breasted coat cut low, and a vest adorned with two double rows of buttons. All seams were at least one inch wide. The pants legs draped twenty-four inches wide from the waist to the dozen buttons skirting the bottom edge. Each coat sleeve flashed with three rows

of buttons, twelve to the row, and no true ragger could be completely equipped or properly groomed without an eraser for removing spots from his celluloid collar.

The ragger and his pettie sailed out on the dance floor with a short-step glide—a series of heel-and-toe movements deftly executed without causing the slightest muscular tremor above the knees. This routine changed smoothly into a ballroom glide in which the couple floated over the sawdust, feet never more than six inches apart, while from the waist up they looked like automatons.

The male ragger was ambitious. He was born in poverty, educated a few years in the lower grades of the public schools, and then forced by family need to work for his living. He was an unskilled, or slightly skilled worker—a waiter, a barkeeper, or a hand in a factory where the work was minutely subdivided. His pettie might work in a factory, a hair or millinery shop, a bakery, or in domestic service.

There can be detected a touch of the autobiographical in these stories even before Bovard appeared as the ragger philosopher columnist, Petie Quinn. The ragger society apparently was made up to some extent of the men and women who had grown up with Bovard in North Side St. Louis. He knew their ways intimately and he captured and cleverly abstracted their dialect. The description was vivid; the atmosphere and local color, earthy and realistic. Dialogue and subtle narrative were the chief devices which held each story together. In one of the first stories a fictitious character, "the king of the raggars," was presented to the reader as "Jack Oliver"—obviously a combination of Bovard's

nickname, Jack, and his Christian name. Jack Oliver was pictured as the epitome of all things typically ragger.

The series enjoyed a wide readership, some of the pieces having been written upon popular demand. J. "Getcher Gun" Clanahan, the *Post-Dispatch* daily versifier, indulged in the current fad. A ragger girl, illustrated by Harry Martin, was quoted as saying,

De Chimmies fights fer love of me;
De Chollies wants to know
If I'm stuck on sassiety,
Since I am all de go

Well, I dunno! Dey must admit
I'm in de soshul whoil
An' I ain't got nuttin' else but "it."
Fer I'm de Ragger Gail

A song, "Queen of the Ragers," its score written by A. Bafunno, was a ragtime march, dedicated to the Sunday *Post-Dispatch*, discoverer of those unique creatures, the ragger and his pettie.

Petie Quinn appeared on September 25 as a typical ragger with views on a current drama, "The Conquerors." Within two months the Sunday magazine was printing an occasional feature, "Ragger Philosophy as Set Forth by Mr. Quinn," and with this development, Petie Quinn became a full-fledged columnist. The first columns continued the narrative thread with plenty of ragger dialect in the conversation, treating of such motifs as "Chimmie's New Year's," "How Petie Quinn's friend, Collars, a Burglar, wasted a whole night of hard work," or the "Bowery Philosopher Tells *Post-Dispatch* Readers How He Got Even with the Duchess." Reflect-

ing a ready, mature humor, these essays were amusing and entertaining. Soon Petie Quinn was commenting on politics, economics, or other aspects of topical public affairs in pieces which, with their clever and sometimes brilliant satire, kept the ragger dialect but gradually dropped the narrative. For example, Petie had his say concerning the problem of the trusts: "All the wise guys is spielin' ferninst th' trusts 'n everybody is hol-lerin' "good eye" at 'em, but they all got the wrong hunch—they're all sore cause they ain't got in on a good trust."

After such gentle spoofing, Petie proceeded to outline his simple formula for eliminating the monopoly problem. Just don't "patternize" the trusts, he said. "Quit dealin' whit Standard Oil Trust. Don't burn coal oil, use candles. 'N if th' candle factories go into a trust, why quit 'em and go t' bed when it gets dark."¹³

Oliver Bovard—the philosopher, the idealist, the reformer—emerges from the yellowing Petie Quinn newspaper columns. From efforts to improve the status of bicycling, he had turned to weightier matters, social and political. Though the subject and the method differed somewhat, the thought and the approach fitted the pattern. Thirty years later, as a managing editor seeking a way to save the country from the emotionally frustrating and economically devastating effects of a depression, Bovard returned to one of the ideas of Petie Quinn in "Forward with Socialism and Democracy," a lengthy essay in which he advocated government ownership of certain utilities and industries. The editor defended his doctrine of middle-of-the-road socialism for

¹³ *Ibid.*, June 5, 1899.

the United States as nothing more than the golden rule enforced in society by the power of government.

Bovard's duties became heavier in the spring and summer of 1900 as the city editorship came his way, and the Petie Quinn essays became history. Aside from Clanahan's poetry column, they possessed a literary quality unsurpassed by anything else locally written for the same pages. Peter Finley Dunn, with a similar column in Irish dialect, had achieved fame as "Mr. Dooley" in Chicago newspapers in the mid-'nineties. Bovard's essays revealed a flair for the dramatic, a sense of humor, considerable literary talent, and a background knowledge of the practical side of public affairs. Above all, they reflected their author's zeal for reform.

Afterwards, when Bovard was famous, he appeared slightly annoyed when anybody recalled the Petie Quinn column. He seemed to want to forget and to make others forget such whimsical journalistic moments.

The City Editor

REPORTER BOVARD found his energies suddenly diverted from local politics and Petie Quinn philosophy to what promised to be the biggest story of the year, the tragic St. Louis street railway strike.¹ It began one morning in May, 1900. Shocked commuters took to the streets in the ill-designed-for-walking tight shoes of the period. Multitudes of men and a few women rode standing in wagons, buggies, and every type of vehicle that could be used. Some bicycled, some rode horseback, others drove horseless carriages. Large numbers did not report to work. Small shopping districts profited, while downtown St. Louis stagnated.

Attitudes and sympathies varied. At the streetcar company's offices, Bovard discovered, the view was one of patronizing indignation. The management assumed the air of a patient father attempting to deal with a rebellious child; it termed such attempts to improve men's welfare dangerously socialistic. Typewritten statements and fat cigars were handed out to representatives of the press. At strike headquarters policy was not so well defined. Reporters were eyed with suspicion, as employees of big business. Citizens sympathized in

¹ See *Post-Dispatch*, May, June, July, August, 1900, *passim*, for accounts of the strike. Allan Bethel, *They Lifted Their Eyes* (Boston, 1951), in fiction, gives an authentic interpretation of the underlying forces behind the event.

proportion to their use of the rails: the laboring masses who rode the streetcars took the side of the strikers; those who owned carriages almost unanimously favored the company. Some citizens blamed the situation on anarchists and agitators.

The deadlock dragged into the hot summer months. As if taking a cue from the weather, tempers seethed. The company, still enjoying the fruits of its 1898 bribery and its deal to purchase the \$50,000,000.00 franchise for only a small fraction of its worth, held firm in the face of workers' demands. It sought to start the cars moving again by means of strikebreakers, usually office employees. This brought spasmodic rioting. Women and children riding scab cars were assaulted; mobs threw granite blocks torn from the pavements into streetcar windows; gangs shellacked trolley wires and dynamited rails. Men quit riding the strikebreaker cars, but the women persisted. Angry crowds stopped the cars and ripped off women's clothing. Back of the violence were the schemes of politicians and the organized underworld to capitalize upon the strike. They wanted to make it appear that the strikers were responsible for the terrorism. This was calculated to injure their cause, as well as the reputation of two men who were working to settle the conflict, Police Commissioner Harry Hawes and the strikers' counsel, Joseph W. Folk. Bovard detected these undercurrents and reported them.

Organized gangs in bogus street railway uniforms broke up a parade of the striking workmen. Then, on Sunday a sheriff's citizen posse fired into a crowd of the strikers returning from a picnic. Fifteen men were

killed and several score injured. The bloodshed caused Hawes and Folk to redouble their efforts to settle the difficulties. Bovard covered conference after conference. Finally an agreement was worked out, and the strikers went jubilantly back to work.

In addition to making Hawes and Folk popular heroes, thus assisting their rise in politics, the strike caused such repercussions in the *Post-Dispatch* line of command that Oliver Bovard was rapidly promoted to the city editorship. Championing the side of the company had caused considerable circulation loss. This brought a personnel shake-up. George S. Johns was relieved of responsibility for news; City Editor Claude Wetmore resigned. Thus the positions of both city editor and managing editor were vacated. Bovard for a short time had assisted Wetmore as assistant city editor. Consequently, he was the logical choice for "temporary city editor" when Wetmore left late in July or early in August. Already Bovard's work and promise as a newsman had impressed F. D. White, Van Benthuyssen, and others close to Pulitzer. Their correspondence² vividly portrays Bovard and the other editors and managers, and gives insight into much of what was happening at 513 Olive Street in St. Louis.

White's great confidence in Bovard's soundness of judgment was reflected in a letter to Pulitzer dated July 23, 1900, in which he described Bovard as a very "level-headed man"—a man whose advice on policy concerning the strike ought to be followed. Indeed,

² Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University Collection, New York, 1900 to 1911, *passim*. Some of the correspondence referred to here is available on microfilm at the *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

White thought Johns, a *Post-Dispatch* man of almost twenty years, could profit from Bovard's counsel in editorial matters, generally. White even placed Bovard prominently among his recommendations for the managing editorship. He "has studied the New York papers and the evidence of his work is shown in every issue of the *Post-Dispatch*." "Bovard is the best newspaper man in the *Post-Dispatch* office today," White wrote,³ possessing great editing ability and originality in news presentation. The only thing against Bovard's appointment to the top news post, White believed, was his lack of seasoning. It appears that for this reason he was rejected for the managing editorship at this time.

A few days later, when White and Johns were submitting suggestions for the city editor's position, Oliver Bovard's name headed the list of three from a canvass of all newspaper talent in the city.⁴ The enthusiastic descriptions of the young city editor from the pen of A. S. Van Benthuyzen, a *World* editor on inspection duty in St. Louis, helped convince Pulitzer of Bovard's qualifications for the permanent appointment.

I have sat with young Bovard at his desk fully 25 per cent of my time. He has consulted me freely. . . . If he is not the stuff that good city editors are made of, then my judgment is worthless. Only a few really big stories have come along, but he has handled them coolly and capably. Besides, he has many little ideas for brightening up the paper. . . . Bovard averaged daily during the last ten days not less than 10, and from that to 25 beats—many of them good ones. . . . I will say honestly that I have not seen a young man in the newspaper business for some time who showed more good, sound horse-sense in his makeup. . . . I recommend O. K. Bovard for permanent City Editor of the *Post-Dispatch*.⁵

³ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., August 1, 1900, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University. ⁴ *Id.* to *id.*, August 3, 1900, *ibid.*

⁵ Van Benthuyzen to *id.*, August 17, 1900, *ibid.*

Bovard's conception of St. Louis as a news center, his ability to place men rapidly on a story without wasting them, and his "cool, level-headed" way of getting work out of men without friction were other points in Van Benthuyzen's case.⁶ Before the first of September, 1900, young Bovard was assigned to the full responsibilities of the city editor's chair, and White, from New York, wrote his endorsement of the move.⁷ A little later Harry L. Dunlap, an older and more experienced editor from the *Republic*, became the managing editor.

Bovard was ambitious. His period of trial in the temporary office over, he was grateful for the chance to show what he could do with real authority. As city editor his first concern was with local news, and it became his foremost objective to make that department of the paper second to none. His powers of studious concentration and his natural alertness and energy were evident. He set the pace for devotion to duty, arriving at the office before seven o'clock every morning and remaining long after others had gone home. It was work he liked, and he seemed never to tire of it.

When Bovard took over the city desk, it was an established working premise that complete local coverage was the proper province of the morning papers. Without making an effort to match such thoroughness, the evening papers depended upon adroit display and striking content. They clipped and rewrote most of the morning papers' routine locals, leaving to them the lead in coverage. Bovard sought to change this practice.⁸ He insisted upon getting the news in quantities, reaching

⁶ *Id.* to *id.*, August 24, 1900, *ibid.*

⁷ White to *id.*, August 31, 1900, *ibid.*

⁸ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 6.

for it in hitherto largely unexploited areas of the city; he emphasized getting the news ahead of the other papers wherever possible. This meant, of course, building and training a superior staff, a goal to which Bovard devoted much effort during these first years at the city desk.

The local news columns not only lacked thoroughness, but also seemed short on ideas, initiative, and foresight. They showed an absence of co-ordinated planning and suffered for want of liveliness and human interest. Managing Editor Dunlap discussed improvements along these lines in talks with Pulitzer at his summer home at Bar Harbor and with White in New York. Strengthening the staff and improving the local news were the subjects of further conferences a year later when Bovard joined Dunlap on his trip East.

Among the most frequently deplored shortcomings was the news department's neglect of its crusading responsibility. White concurred with Frank R. O'Neil, who became the chief St. Louis executive in 1902, in the opinion that both Bovard and Dunlap were content to use the news columns simply for reporting at the expense of campaigns for the public welfare.⁹ They admitted that both men were ready to leap into a crusade when they detected the odor of a scandal or crime that might be exploited. But even in sensing the possibilities for journalistic development of these topics, the paper seemed lethargic. O'Neil believed that the city editor was satisfied to use bare police reports, "usually hasty gleanings by unintelligent men," and cursory

⁹ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., December 11, 1900, and O'Neil to *id.*, n. d., *ibid.*

legislative and court matters. Rarely did he find the paper digging up its own news of "the festering conditions now being exposed in all of our city institutions, which were easily within reach of the newspapers for years and which were only discovered by Mayor Wells." In addition, constructive news from commercial and mercantile sources and from the civil courts was overlooked. On the other hand, Bovard held his men well in hand; and he had an unusual talent for keeping up with local events so that he was rarely beaten because of neglect or carelessness. His shortcomings, O'Neil said, were due to need for more direction from his managing editor and for more experience to broaden the range of his vision. It should be remembered that O'Neil was making criticisms he hoped might impress Pulitzer. Although his analyses seem to have been generally fair, they often did not take into account extenuating circumstances.

Another weakness appeared to be the absence of news support of editorials. White referred to this problem several times in his reports to the publisher. Upon Pulitzer's invitation, Johns cited numerous examples of neglect of this sort, together with what he termed absence of intelligent grasp and direction in the work of news-gathering. For instance, he wrote, the *Post-Dispatch* published a story concerning a pending bill authorizing the awarding of contracts for city purchases. According to the story the awards recommended hinted at the existence of a combine or a monopoly organized to seek the contracts, but the news story left the question largely unanswered. Whereupon, Johns outlined what information was needed and requested the news

department to put a reporter on it. This resulted in a small nebulous story which explained little. Editorial writers needed facts which should be gathered by the leg men in the news department, Johns maintained. "Full information is necessary for effective editorial work along the lines of public service. Accurate and complete reporting, to my mind, are necessary to the gaining and retaining of public confidence."¹⁰

O'Neil lent his voice also to decry the absence of collaboration. The difficulty stemmed to some extent from the nature of the Pulitzer plan of maintaining strictly independent departments. "It is very hard to interest the modern reporter or city editor in work directed to public service, unless there is some possibility of scandal or crime in the development," O'Neil commented, and added, "I have no hope of ever bringing the Junior Bovart to the point of view which will reveal to him any newspaper work unrelated to the criminal code."¹¹ White, who understood Bovard better than O'Neil did, observed that the city editor did not want to be bothered with crusades because they interfered with news-gathering. They encroached on news space and consumed the time and energy of his men—efforts better devoted to reporting the regular news. Bovard's view was that Johns would ruin the news character of the paper if reporters were permitted to follow his suggestions in pursuing the details of a crusade.¹² Another factor in the argument may have been the city editor's desire to assert his complete independ-

¹⁰ George S. Johns to *id.*, February 20, 1904, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

¹¹ O'Neil to *id.*, June 7, 1904, *ibid.* Perhaps O'Neil had in mind Pulitzer's desire to diminish sensational treatment.

¹² White to *id.*, November 3, 1903, *ibid.*

ence of the editorial department; he was going to be master in his city room, and Johns might just as well realize this at the beginning.

Bovard earned acclaim as an idea man at the regular editorial council meetings composed of O'Neil, Johns, Dunlap, and Herbert Trask, the Sunday editor. The meetings were started in an effort to co-ordinate the work of the various news and editorial departments. Reports of these conferences were sprinkled with Bovard suggestions. At one meeting his was the only idea contributed—a Sunday feature narrating how wireless messages could be sent from moving trains. An analysis of the news sections reported at another council meeting revealed a count of 198 “ideas, features, or treatments” that had been used over a short period of time. Of 8 staff members given credit for originating these, Bovard headed the list with 58 suggestions. Dunlap came second with 38.¹³

By 1905 the city editor had the local news department well in hand. Complaints of deficiencies reached Pulitzer's ears less and less frequently. More often than not he heard commendation of Bovard and his men.

The famous Folk investigations, causing a wide reaction, furnished the greatest local news situation of Bovard's decade at the city desk of the *Post-Dispatch*, or—it might truly be said—of almost any other decade. The city editor had scarcely settled in his new position before the rumblings could be heard, and soon the news of event-after-startling-event was breaking. Bovard's 1898 exposure of the boodlers had come to naught after the grand jury's refusal to indict. Members of the mu-

¹³ *Id.* to *id.*, July 12, 1905, *ibid.*

nicipal assembly continued to use their office for personal profit. After the turn of the century a quarrel over the boodle caused a deadlock between the bribers and the bribed. News of the impasse leaked, and Circuit Attorney Joseph W. Folk seized the opportunity to leap in with a vigorous investigation. With the facts of newer bribes, he brought to light proof of the earlier Central Traction scandal, much as Bovard had reported it. As evidence of additional corruption poured in, the *Post-Dispatch* had an important hand in the developments.

The city's transit business was divided between the St. Louis and Suburban Company and the St. Louis Transit Company. The Suburban ostensibly wanted to extend its lines and sought a city franchise permitting expansion. According to an undated report to Pulitzer written by Managing Editor Dunlap, the Suburban planned to sell this franchise to its rival for \$2,000,000.00, thus adding that amount to its capital stock without laying a rail. To facilitate passage of the franchise bill without undue friction, the customary lubricant was proffered. Charles H. Turner, the Suburban's president, approached Boss Edward Butler, general agent for the assembly combines. Butler estimated it would take \$145,000.00 to get the bill voted. Turner thought this was too much money; so he employed Philip Stock, an experienced lobbyist, to bypass Butler and negotiate directly with the assembly. Stock found that body, dealing through its member-spokesman Charles H. Kratz, willing to sell out for \$10,000.00 less, \$75,000.00 to be paid to the house of delegates and \$60,000.00 to the council. The total amount of the two

bribes was placed in safety deposit boxes in separate banks to await the granting of the franchise. Keys were retained by Stock, for the company; John K. Murrell, agent for the house of delegates; and John G. Brinkmeyer, councilman.¹⁴

But the well-laid plans hit unexpected snags. First, the bill was held up in committee. Additional bribery finally got it passed in the house. Reaching the council, it was again delayed by court action on a right-of-way petition from property owners. Eventually the proposal got by both houses of the assembly, and its backers breathed more easily. Then the mayor vetoed it; whereupon the assembly grimly passed it over the veto. Despite this demonstration of determination, assemblymen were doomed to see their bill killed when the rival St. Louis Transit Company secured a permanent injunction in the supreme court. In this circumstance, the elected representatives of the people demanded payment, claiming logically the fulfillment of their part of the contract. The Suburban, still without its franchise, refused to hand over the money. In an effort to break the stalemate, the house combine finally threatened to publicize the scandal unless the Suburban paid the bribe money. Rumors of this dispute got out, or at least were picked up by Red Galvin, who was still working smoothly as an inside information man, this time for the *Star*. Galvin's story appeared on the back page of the *Star* on January 21, 1902.¹⁵

Using the *Star* article as a lever, Folk went into action. After first parading more than one hundred princi-

¹⁴ Wetmore, *Battle Against Bribery*, 27; Geiger, *Folk*, 29-30.

¹⁵ Geiger, *Folk*, 28.

pals before the grand jury without uncovering sufficient evidence to justify a single indictment, Folk finally cracked the case by bluffing Charles Turner and Philip Stock into turning state's evidence.¹⁶ His next step was to seize the bribe money as vital evidence. A week later the grand jury was finding true bills, and the first arrests were made. The afternoon extras of January 28 carried the breathtaking story of the deal. Three days after that, Ellis Wainwright, wealthy brewer, and Henry Nicholas, Anheuser-Busch stockholder, both prominent citizens and Suburban Company directors, were indicted for bribery. Wainwright happened to be in Europe at the time, and he decided to stay there, beyond the reach of the law. Nicholas received two continuances, then fled to Europe. Kratz and Murrell, the assembly leaders, were indicted for soliciting bribes; but before they could be arrested, they escaped to Mexico, where they avoided arrest because no extradition treaty to cover bribery existed between the two countries. Nevertheless, Folk located Kratz in Mexico in late April and promptly dispatched two detectives to persuade him to return. The circuit attorney also petitioned the United States Secretary of State John Hay to request extradition. None of these efforts succeeded. Folk, then, sought to get the existing extradition treaty changed. By the time this was negotiated, it was the end of June, the expiration date for the period covered by the statute of limitations. But the new treaty was not retroactive, and thus could not apply to past offenses. Clearly, if the men were brought back it would have to be by persuasion.

¹⁶ Wetmore, *Battle Against Bribery*, 31-33.

Folk received word that John K. Murrell, the man who knew enough to convict members of the combine, would return if promised clemency. At this point the *Post-Dispatch* stepped into the case. Exactly what happened appears to have been obscured in some accounts, because, apparently to set the record straight, two undated documents bearing the signatures of Oliver K. Bovard and Carlos F. Hurd were written and filed in the *Post-Dispatch* reference department. One, written in the first person and signed by Bovard, described his role in the 1898 boodlers' exposé; the second, a memorandum signed by Hurd and approved by Bovard, referred to the agreement between Folk and the *Post-Dispatch* which led to the return of Murrell. According to the latter memorandum by Hurd, the plan for effecting Murrell's return was originally presented by Folk to W. C. McCarty, four-courts reporter for the *Post-Dispatch*. Folk, in gratitude to the *Post-Dispatch* for its support and in his confidence in its men, proposed that McCarty go to Mexico in a private capacity to bring Murrell back, and in return, the *Post-Dispatch* might have the exclusive story. McCarty set forth the proposal in detail in a memorandum to City Editor Bovard dated August 13, 1902. Bovard and Dunlap submitted it to the editorial council, which decided to send Frank R. O'Neil instead of McCarty.¹⁷

In Mexico City, O'Neil found his man and convinced him that the best way out lay in returning to St. Louis and giving himself up. The two then quietly entrained for the journey home. Their entry into St. Louis was a closely-guarded secret. Folk took Murrell's con-

¹⁷ Carlos F. Hurd, undated memorandum, in *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

fession one Saturday night, notifying the *Post-Dispatch* to be ready for extras Monday. Dunlap got the substance of the confession Sunday at Folk's house; in the meantime O'Neil had written his first-person by-line story of the trip. Dunlap said he wrote out the headlines and laid out the page Sunday afternoon. The printers arrived at four o'clock next morning, set the type, made up pages one and two, rolled the forms into the foreman's office and disguised them. There they stayed until a release call should come from the circuit attorney's office.¹⁸

During this time Folk was busy getting warrants into the hands of his officers. Feeling reasonably sure of being able to arrest the men, he telephoned Dunlap at eleven-thirty that within the next twenty-five minutes it would be safe to put an extra on the streets. This noon edition was followed forty-five minutes later by another, giving Murrell's confession, which apparently had been omitted from the first extra; the text of the "thieves' oath"; the story of the inside operations of the assembly combine; and the arrest of some of the boodlers. Then came the regular five, seven, and nine o'clock editions with the newer developments. The *Post-Dispatch* beat the town.¹⁹

Page one of the next day, September 9, displayed a Folk interview in which the circuit attorney gave the *Post-Dispatch* "entire credit" for bringing Murrell back. He thanked the paper for a great public service and for withholding publication until he felt he could release the news. While it appears certain from the foregoing that

¹⁸ Dunlap to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., September 9, 1902, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the paper kept faith with Folk,²⁰ there seems to exist some doubt as to whether or not Folk kept faith with the *Post-Dispatch*. John Magner, the *Star*'s managing editor, was a close friend of the circuit attorney's and therefore seems to have been apprised of the events. After the first day of initial *Post-Dispatch* exclusives, the *Star* was able to leap in and remain hot on the trail of later news. Certainly the *Post-Dispatch* editors thought that Folk did not entirely keep his promise. In a letter to Pulitzer, dated September 9, 1902, Dunlap said as much, and added, "We are not raising the question of that now, as we beat the town both in time and in the story. We have, however, complete evidence that he did give this story to one other newspaper Saturday, and are reserving that knowledge for use at the proper time if occasion ever requires it."

In the subsequent revelations, offshoots of the Suburban scandal, Folk seems to have given the *Star* an even break with the Pulitzer paper. But in performance, the latter, because of its initial advantage and of the long background of information at its disposal, led in investigating new channels, often running ahead of both the *Star* and the circuit attorney. It reprinted the details of the old Central Traction bribery affair of 1898. This story brought Circuit Attorney Folk to the *Post-Dispatch* office. Dunlap, Bovard, and Johns got out the files and told Folk what they knew, then went before the grand jury with this evidence. Robert M. Snyder, the promoter of the earlier deal, was arrested. Because

²⁰ Thus, if the implication in Geiger, *Folk*, 40, that the *Post-Dispatch* disclosures may have been premature, permitting some assemblymen to escape arrest is true, the responsibility was entirely Folk's for he telephoned to authorize the release of the story.

of the Missouri statute of limitations, cases could not be brought against receivers or givers of bribes after two years, provided the offenders remained within the jurisdiction of the state. Snyder could be, and was, prosecuted under the act because he had been living in New York. Bovard's first story for the *Post-Dispatch* was officially confirmed in a report of the February, 1902, circuit court grand jury made to Judge O'Neil Ryan April 5, 1902. This report stated that the result would have been different had the indicting body discharged its duty faithfully and vigorously.²¹ Folk told Dunlap that the *Post-Dispatch* case was the most complete he ever saw.²²

Dunlap was astonished to note a quotation from Boss Butler buried on page two of the *Globe-Democrat* in which he baldly revealed how the Suburban bill's backers had first approached him, but thought his price too high. "If they had agreed to my terms, they would have had the franchise without any trouble." Such was the statement attributed to Butler. Dunlap could hardly believe the Boss so ill-advised as to make such a comment public; so he sent a man to verify it. Butler not only confirmed his statement, but emphasized it when he gave the *Post-Dispatch* the famous "Fee, Fee, Fee" interview. Soon after, Joe McAuliffe, the *Post-Dispatch* reporter, got a tip that Dr. Henry H. Chapman of the board of health had a good Butler story. Bovard knew Chapman and agreed to get a story from him that evening. He not only saw Chapman but another board

²¹ Undated MS. filed with Hurd's and Bovard's first person accounts, in *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

²² Dunlap to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., n.d., Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

member, Dr. Albert Merrell, as well. Both told Bovard that Butler had offered each \$2,500.00 in cash to recommend his system of reducing garbage to get his contract renewed. It was on the basis of this interview and the testimony of the two doctors that Butler was indicted.²³ Because the Boss symbolized crooked machine rule, his indictment constituted a tactical triumph for the reform forces.

Close upon the heels of other exclusive *Post-Dispatch* revelations concerning the letting of city contracts to assembly members themselves, news of the city lighting scandals broke. Like the Traction and Suburban scandals, this lighting franchise fraud was long suspected; but it had escaped official investigation for several years. The utilities concerns had not been overzealous in erecting street lights. When complaints about the absence of lights reached Mayor Ziegenhein, he responded with the often-quoted remark: "Well, we got a moon yet, ain't it?" In this particular scandal, however, the price demanded by Murrell for getting the bill through the assembly exceeded the amount previously named by Butler. But the assembly had fallen into line after the Boss himself personally visited the chambers to negotiate with members. The bill, which granted a monopoly of city lighting contracts to a New York firm, had been passed unanimously. Afterwards each member had come to Julius Lehman's house to receive his part of the pay-off.²⁴

Excitement ran high as day after day the newspapers pieced together all the sorry details. One disclosure led to another and in time appalled citizens could see

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See Geiger, *Folk*, 39-40.

plainly through the ramifications. A pattern of incredible betrayal of the public trust was emerging. These developments were enlivened by rumors of threats upon the lives of both Murrell and Folk. A large segment of the public, led by the *Post-Dispatch*, rallied behind Folk and demanded reform. On the contrary, however, the indictments of Nicholaus and Wainwright aroused sympathy in some quarters. This minority view deplored the exposures for reflecting upon the reputation of such "respectable" citizens and, indeed, the good name of the city itself. Adolphus Busch, who had signed the bonds of the two men, remarked that they had the support of the best element in St. Louis.

Folk said that as long as he was after Boss Butler and the grafters in the city council he was a hero, enjoying the support of the press, the chamber of commerce, and businessmen; but when he started to prosecute leading citizens, the press turned against him and people began to urge that the actions be dropped because they were bad for business. "I have had little encouragement since then," and, Folk added, his only financial help was from Charles R. Crane of Chicago.²⁵ Folk's references to the press did not apply to the *Post-Dispatch*, which stood behind him throughout the fight, and later supported him valiantly in his campaign for the governorship. The circuit attorney's acknowledgment of financial assistance also appears to have been only partially true. The assembly, of course, had refused to appropriate money for its own prosecution; so the Folk investigations had to seek funds elsewhere. James L. Blair headed a citizens' committee which raised \$6,000.00. When this fund was

²⁵ Cited, *ibid.*, 32.

exhausted and help for the circuit attorney's office again became urgent, the *Post-Dispatch* started a drive with \$500.00 and received public contributions amounting to \$15,000.00.²⁶ The noise of these exposés reverberated throughout the nation.²⁷

Folk's success in bringing the offenders to justice was not impressive because of factors, mostly legal, beyond his control. The 1902 investigations resulted in sixty-one indictments against twenty-four persons, but he was able to send only eight to prison. Not one of the major figures served a day's sentence, freed either by reversals of the Supreme Court or expiration of the two year statute of limitations.²⁸

It appears from the facts presented that City Editor Bovard's part in the crusade was a major one, although Dunlap sought to take most of the credit for himself and even to discredit Bovard. In the managing editor's reports he repeatedly emphasized his own leadership and direction, once writing, "After two days I told the city editor to give me local men that I named, and for three or four days I personally handled the story." He acknowledged the suggestions given by Johns, but reiterated that the initiative and execution were his. In fact,

²⁶ Evidence refuting Folk's contention is ample. His biographer, Geiger, gives fair credit to the *Post-Dispatch*. See also *Post-Dispatch*, September 9, November 9, 1902, and December 13, 1903. Also, Dunlap, reporting the paper's role to Pulitzer, stressed its campaign to rally financial support. Pulitzer himself offered five hundred dollars or more for the prosecution.

²⁷ Geiger points out that the St. Louis exposés started Lincoln Steffens, the great investigator of political chicanery in city and state governments, on his muckraking career. Folk was looking for publicity to rally public interest behind him. Steffens was looking for a story. In collaboration with Claude Wetmore, Bovard's predecessor, Steffens wrote "Tweed Days in St. Louis," the first of many such stories to appear in *McClure's Magazine*, marking the beginning of a new epoch of exposures. See C. C. Regier, *Era of the Muckrakers* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 59.

²⁸ Geiger, *Folk*, 46-47.

the only Bovard contribution he mentioned was the city editor's work in bringing in the evidence against Butler. Being a local development, the campaign would normally become a major responsibility of the city editor's department; but a managing editor may take over an extensive effort, when big events break or big problems arise in one of the departments under his control. While Dunlap may have been correct in claiming credit for the direction of the work, his belittling of Bovard seems scarcely justified or fair. "When the bribery case was sprung," he wrote, "our city editor did not seem to grasp the magnitude of it. Urging and direction did not seem to give us what we should have had; not through stubbornness on his part, but because it was the first big story he had had to handle and it seemed to daze him."²⁹ As his own statement shows, Bovard must have had keen interest in the whole affair. He could only have been eager to bring to justice at last the crimes he had reported three years before. Bovard could not have failed to grasp the magnitude or importance of the story; considering his characteristic astuteness, one can scarcely imagine him "dazed." Dunlap was apparently trying to make a favorable impression on Pulitzer; and too, there exist reasons for believing that Dunlap was jealous of the young city editor. In any event Bovard's role was greater than Dunlap was willing to acknowledge.

From city to state the revelations spread. Six months later news of graft came from Jefferson City. The investigations of the *Post-Dispatch's* legislative reporter, J. J. McAuliffe, led to disclosure of the famous baking powder scandal of 1903. Lieutenant Governor John A.

²⁹ Dunlap to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., n. d., Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

Lee resigned after being forced to face charges of complicity; four state senators and Daniel J. Kelley, well-known lobbyist for the baking powder trust, were indicted and convicted.³⁰

Meanwhile, in Bovard's own bailiwick, vast preparations were being made to handle a great continuing story, a story which would focus the eyes of the nation on St. Louis and perhaps expunge some of the notoriety of the scandals. This was the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and World's Fair of 1904. For years the *Post-Dispatch* had editorially advocated such an observance, and now elaborate plans for its coverage and promotion were drawn. December, 1903, would also mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Pulitzer ownership of the merged *Post* and *Dispatch*. To commemorate the paper's origin and present an advance prospectus of the fair, a special 160-page edition was brought out on December 13, 1903. While the edition presented the history and achievements of the *Post-Dispatch*, it devoted many pages to the progress of the city during the preceding quarter-century. The coming fair was previewed in text, story, and picture. W. C. Steigers, the business manager, telegraphed Pulitzer that the special edition, carrying six hundred columns of advertising, would sell in St. Louis and vicinity 250,000 complete papers, counting the fast mail and city editions. He estimated that more than 1,000,000 readers would peruse these copies.

The World's Fair was a great stimulus to newspaper circulations, as indeed, to business generally. It

³⁰ See Wetmore, *Battle Against Bribery*, 145-53; St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, April 9-May 16, 1903, *passim*.

cost more than \$40,000,000.00; and before it closed, almost 20,000,000 persons had gone through its gates. St. Louisans grudgingly admitted that the Chicago World's Fair had exceeded that attendance. Nevertheless, the traditional conservatism of the city had prevented over-expansion and overspeculation, so that after the event closed there was little deflationary trend. Property values continued to grow, and new factories and business enterprises kept pace. St. Louis, with 30,000,000 people living within a 500-mile radius, was the fourth city of America in population and manufacturing. The fair advertised these facts to the country. Gawking crowds from everywhere poured into the city. The *Post-Dispatch* gave thousands of columns to its coverage. St. Louis and the *Post-Dispatch*, as well, it seemed, were stepping out of their provincialism.

The 1904 exposition also meant growth to the paper's business. Even before it opened, the need for new quarters to handle expanding production had become imperative. The building at 513 Olive Street, which had served since 1888 as the paper's third home,³¹ was completely outgrown. Accordingly, one Sunday morning early in 1902 the task of moving to 210-12 North Broadway commenced. The job was finished with equipment placed in time to issue the regular midday edition Monday. The staff worked hard; Bovard, Dunlap, and Hugh McSkimming made twenty-four hour records.³² Just before the fair opened, the average weekday circulation stood at 124,000. During the fair, it

³¹ Previous locations were 111 North Broadway, 1878-1882, and 513-515 Market Street, 1882-1888.

³² White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., January 14, 1902, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

rose to 149,000; and after it closed, the figure leveled at around 140,000. The Sunday paper showed even greater growth—from 186,000 in December, 1903, to 246,000; it did not afterwards drop under 200,000. Advertising increases for the period appeared even more striking.³³

Coverage of the fair did not interfere with crusading. In 1903 the paper conducted a strenuous but successful fight against the plans of the Terminal Railroad Association, a combination of fourteen railroads, to obtain a long-term franchise without adequate compensation. It campaigned for the repeal of the so-called Breeder's law, a moral fight against a clique which had reportedly netted a million dollars a year under a law then on the statute books. The repeal was effected by a margin of one vote against the efforts of St. Louis senators who had been in league with the race-track ring. Whole senate sessions were devoted to denunciation of the *Post-Dispatch* for its stand in the controversy.³⁴ However, the Pulitzer precedent in this campaign was followed by the *Chronicle* and at a slower pace, the *Globe-Democrat*. The *Republic* was only half-heartedly on the same side. After intermittent attempts to unmask widespread gambling on river boats and at the race tracks, Bovard and his local staff on May 30, 1904, gave the public a clear and convincing picture of vices on excursion boats. The grand jury acted. The following winter, partly as a result of a hard crusade, the legislature passed a law curbing race-track gambling. But betting continued until the governor threatened to send

³³ *Two Anniversaries* (New York, n. d.), 55-56.

³⁴ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., April 3, 1905, Columbia University.

the state militia.³⁵ A campaign conducted solely by the *Post-Dispatch* was the famous Bridge Arbitrary fight which began in November, 1904, and reached its peak in the early months of 1905.

The paper had a big story, and an exclusive one, in 1905 when the Post Office Department in Washington issued a fraud citation against the People's United States Bank of Clayton, St. Louis County. Except for the alertness of reporter Curtis Betts, however, the paper would not have had a beat. The bank was operated by Edward Lewis, who had persuaded citizens to buy stock not only in his bank but in other of his burgeoning concerns. One of these was *Woman's Magazine*, an enterprise capitalized at more than one million dollars. The *Post-Dispatch* began to investigate in January. By midsummer Lewis had been convicted of false and fraudulent promises made in the mail with intent to deceive both stockholders and 65,000 mail-order depositors. The bank went into receivership. Betts and Bovard had the story in type and reporters on the ground when process was served in the case.³⁶ Lewis later sued for libel asking \$750,000.00 damages, but the paper defended successfully on the basis of a full and fair report of privileged matter.³⁷

Bovard was too sound in his judgment not to realize that the paper could not rely entirely on crusades and flashy exclusives. He strove diligently to make its daily news coverage the most thorough in the city. As little

³⁵ O'Neil to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., June 8, 1904 and White to *id.*, July 12, 1905, all *ibid.*

³⁶ Dunlap to *id.*, June 5, 1905; Editorial Conference Report, June 9, 1905; and White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., July 12, 1905, all *ibid.*

³⁷ See *Post-Dispatch*, January 15-April 1, 1912, *passim*.

by little he improved the efficiency of his reporting staff, his news vision broadened, and with it, his range of subjects for news treatment. His energy to find news, his intelligent planning, his foresight, and his eagerness to beat competition were all signposts of his progress. During these years he was responsible for the *Post-Dispatch's* lead in the local news field. It ceased to rewrite the morning papers; in fact, the customary practice was reversed. The morning papers began to rewrite from the *Post-Dispatch*, following its lead not only in the big disclosures but also in routine news.

This achievement was recognized by his superiors. In February, 1905, White was able to report that the local staff was beyond question the strongest in St. Louis. Toward the close of that year, he described Bovard as "the first city editor in St. Louis." He added in praise, "Lean, keen, and tireless, his initiative makes up for his acidity. It has been a big news year, and he has been a great producer." Chapin, after an inspection trip, observed that Bovard had more untiring energy than perhaps any man on the staff. "He is quick to scent a news story and a good man to develop it. He works with unflagging zeal all of the time and I think the reporters respect and sustain him."³⁸ O'Neil described the city editor as farsighted. "He figures days ahead on his layouts, and they are a credit to him. He has a fine imagination as to the most forcible presentation of things that interest him." His greatest shortcoming seemed to be his austerity. O'Neil thought his personality repelled news tips. "No man in the building is willing to go to him

³⁸ Charles Chapin to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., June 17, 1907, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

with news," he said.³⁹ Alfred Butes wrote that Bovard, with many splendid qualities of intelligence, energy, and keenest interest, handicapped himself by his almost total lack of manners. It was evident that Bovard's journalistic skill was developed, though his personality needed more polish.

³⁹ O'Neil to *id.*, August 27, 1907, *ibid.*

Mr. Bovard and His Men

A. S. VAN BENTHUYSEN observed that the new city editor's head had not grown too big for his hat. This represented the opinion of a superior. The men whose lot it was to work under Bovard's supervision soon had reason to think differently. Bovard was still "Jack" to reporter William Henry "Harry" James the morning he took over the city desk. The two were wont to spend gay evenings together, passing the time in one drinking establishment after another. On this particular morning, James, unaware that Bovard had been promoted, telephoned the newsroom, and his companion of the previous evening answered.

"Hello, Jack," greeted James warmly.

The voice at the office end of the wire was recognizable, but unfamiliarly formal. "This is Mr. Bovard, the city editor. Please bear that in mind, James."¹

W. Hurst Curry, another colleague of the news-gathering staff, by a similar experience learned that the new editor was no longer to be addressed in tones of the old familiarity. On the same morning Curry sauntered up to the city desk to report for an assignment.

"What's doing, O. K.?"

Bovard stiffened; then he firmly ordered Curry to

¹ Irving Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard, A Great Managing Editor, A Complex Man," in *Page One*, 1948, 12.

step out of the room, re-enter, and address him as "Mr. Bovard." When Curry hesitated, wondering whether Bovard really meant it, the new boss issued an ultimatum: Curry would either do as ordered, or turn in his resignation. Curry complied.²

In this manner from the very beginning, discipline was established in what Irving Dilliard in his sketch of Bovard called the "one-man school of journalism." Other members of the news staff soon felt the force of his personality. To engender the proper atmosphere of respect that Bovard felt ought to prevail, he was addressed and spoken of as "Mr. Bovard" from that time on. While he signed office memorandums "OKB," few ever addressed him that way. It was only among his family and close friends that the nickname "Jack" survived. Once while on a hunting trip, Bovard, Clark McAdams, columnist and editorial writer, and Daniel Fitzpatrick, the cartoonist, were sitting around a campfire. Fitzpatrick, in a moment of expansiveness, asked, "Why is it that you call me 'Fitz' and Charley Ross 'Charley,' but none of us ever calls you 'Jack'?"

Bovard smiled, "That's probably because you've got a hired man complex."³

The mantle of authority had transformed the care-free reporter, and the change was striking. All who knew "Mr. Bovard," the city editor, seemed to sense his unfortunately cold temperament, which equally held at a distance his staff and his visitors. His manner was aloof, domineering, and at times even arrogant. He gave

² James Whiteside, who knew Curry well, is the authority for this story. Julian Rammelkamp to the author, January 11, 1951.

³ Dwight Perrin to *id.*, October 20, 1951; Lawrence Laybourne to *id.*, January 13, 1949.

no confidences and invited none. Probably in those days a slightly sadistic streak that he had not mastered emerged from time to time. Alfred Butes, a Pulitzer secretary, and F. D. White both saw things in the Bovard office personality that reminded them of Chapin. White once said Bovard was a "more intelligent edition of Chapin."

All this presented a great contrast to the easygoing, likable fellow who had been Jack Bovard, reporter and ragger philosopher. In those days before the turn of the century, Bovard as a young man-about-town moved in a circle of intimate friends, mostly fellow newspapermen. Among these were Joseph J. and Daniel J. McAuliffe, Harry Martin, Willis Leonard Clanahan, Andrew W. Ford, and Harry James. Tall and good-looking, though slightly sallow complexioned, Bovard appeared a trifle cynical; yet he impressed those who knew him as he really was—a modest man, retiring rather than austere. In a crowd he was not affable; but in man-to-man conversation he appeared to be at ease and self-confident. He was always impeccably dressed, even dapper. He was attractive to women, and stories abound of his affairs during this period. St. Louis was an open city in those days, and Bovard and his fun-loving, roistering pals knew their way around quite as well as any man. They would by habit frequently indulge in an evening together, patronizing the various bars and other places of amusement. And on one or two occasions, Bovard was known to have drunk too much. Once at Delmar Gardens, Ford and Bovard went swimming in the fountain. It was done on a dare when both men had been tippling. However, only once or twice after he

became city editor did these episodes become public knowledge. Later they were a closely-guarded secret. In later life, when he had become a famous editor, Bovard would every now and then hold a quiet old-time drinking session with a few close friends—the type of evening that he and almost every other reporter used to spend openly. But these were infrequent occasions.

One night shortly after becoming city editor, Bovard was leaving a saloon with Joe McAuliffe. When they boarded a streetcar, Bovard bumped his head against the door jamb, suffering a minor gash on the forehead. After the accident, McAuliffe decided to take Bovard home. By the time he did so and got back to his room, the hour was late. He overslept and got to the office hours behind time. Bovard, bandage on head, sat at his desk waiting for him. He summoned McAuliffe and delivered a quiet, sharp tongue-lashing for tardiness. McAuliffe told him the reason for it.

"That is an entirely different matter," Bovard said without smiling. "You can take a week off without pay." McAuliffe went home. But Bovard had a way of acknowledging his indebtedness; McAuliffe's monthly check was not discounted.

For the most part, however, Bovard had almost immediately put behind him the old life. Proud of his position and title, he did his best to rearrange his private affairs to conform to the dignity of his new situation. No more vulgar public drinking episodes; no more loose friendships with staff subordinates. His old relationships with women began to appear tawdry.

Bovard, well past the age when most men marry, had chosen to remain a bachelor and young blade around

town. In one of his Petie Quinn columns he had satirized matrimony, renouncing it for himself because it was not consistent with his ideas of personal liberty.⁴ But this view changed when he met the woman who became his wife. And too, his friend, Harry Martin, had taken that important step about the time Bovard became city editor.

The Martins, as mutual friends, introduced Bovard to his future wife. She was a pretty girl named Suzanne Thompson, daughter of James Thompson of San Antonio, Texas, and a visitor in the St. Louis home of her aunt Mrs. Barringer, where the couple met. Before long Bovard fell in love with the dark-eyed girl. They were married on June 16, 1902, at the Church of the Redeemer on Pine Street. A wedding trip to Chicago and Buffalo followed. The bride was about eighteen years old and her husband was thirty.

"Mr. Bovard," the city editor of the *Post-Dispatch*, was a changed man. He wanted to forget that part of his past that did not appear to be in keeping with his new position. His new attitude was expressed to Hugh McSkimming who, years later, standing at the editor's desk, recalled the Delmar Gardens escapade.

"I was hoping everyone had forgotten that," Bovard said in a low, sincere voice.

Those who had known him longest were aware of the emergence of a strange dual personality, the result perhaps of the demands and challenges of his new work. Before he could hope to raise to a stable level the quality of the news, he realized he would have to elevate the

⁴ Petie said, "A man which is married is in the same class whit Dreyfus. He's 'it' no matter what he's charged whit." *Post-Dispatch*, September 2, 1899.

total talent at his command. Generally, beginning reporters lacked education and background, and even experienced reporters required a period of training. This task was primarily that of the city desk. Standards of English usage and style left much to be desired. According to O'Neil, the paper often deserved the characterization of a "literary slaughterhouse," where the "laws of rhetoric, syntax, and even orthography are common subjects of assault."⁵ The local news output, he thought, was too often barren of the conventional and essential forms of written language. Other common flaws were inaccuracy, carelessness, and lack of thoroughness in gathering and writing the news. So at the risk of being accused of snobbishness, Bovard made of the city room a school to correct these deficiencies.

In appearance, the city editor might have been a Roman patrician. His handsome, finely cut features and his brilliant glacial blue eyes gave the impression of a man born to rule. He kept his emotions well under control. Most of the time he appeared calm, spoke in low tones, and was generally undemonstrative; but he could become surprisingly intense in discussing subjects close to his interests. Although he was a man of strong likes and dislikes, he apparently never permitted prejudices to govern his actions. His mind was receptive to new ideas. His judgment was quick, courageous, and decisive, reflecting self-confidence. His journalistic skill inspired trust and commanded respect.

The atmosphere generated by the Bovard methods thoroughly permeated the city room. Discipline was

⁵ O'Neil to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., June 7, 1904, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

present but not obvious. The predominant mood was one of quietness and deliberation, with a minimum of noise, bustle, and hurly-burly usually associated with newspaper offices. Homer Croy observed that while Bovard never wasted his time on a cudgel, he had "a little private rapier."

Though most of his reprimands were pronounced calmly, they could be cuttingly sarcastic or ironical. He had the capacity to appear calm even when excitement was running high. He told a reporter who was writing furiously against deadline: "Take your time, man, you've got two minutes." At times he was given to leaning back with his long legs stretched out under the copy desk, apparently lost in thought. On one of these occasions an assistant telegraph editor remarked to Lowell Mellett, "It's a liberal education, just to watch that man think!"

Bovard employed his physical appearance and his newsroom manner to the fullest advantage as disciplinary weapons. As an individual, such methods made him heartily disliked by most of the staff and even hated by some. Roy W. Howard, who worked at the telegraph desk in the same room but not under Bovard, admired his ability but as an individual considered him the classic example of "stuffy, high-hat, supercilious, cold-blooded, know-it-all type of executive." As an editor, however, he was devastatingly effective. The rank and file of the men regarded him with mixed feelings of fear, awe, and respect. To them he personified the *Post-Dispatch*, and they had great admiration for his professional precision. Generally, the men who trained under Bovard recognized the professional value of such treatment and

appreciated it, however painful it may have been to accept at the time.⁶

The city editor sent cub Mellett around the corner to pick up a safecracking story. The news amounted to little, and he was soon back in the office relating the facts to Bovard, who listened, then said, "And there was no telephone?" For another assignment Bovard gave Mellett an elaborate set of instructions. Out on the leg work, the reporter telephoned in to say "I think I've got that story." Bovard in a soft, too-gentle voice, replied, "What story?" His unusual faculty for making his men fear they might be intellectually inferior had a high educational value because they did not willingly expose themselves twice to Bovard sarcasm.⁷

Bovard was courteously icy and icily courteous in greeting would-be reporter John E. Wray, fresh from studying engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Had the young man any experience? Wray had worked as editor of his college paper. "My, is that so!" Bovard commented with just the correct inflection.⁸

A classic anecdote illustrating the city editor's method of firing a man has its counterpart in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. While Bovard could not recall it, most of his contemporaries believed it really happened. The story concerned a young race-track tout, whom Bovard discharged. "But Mr. Bovard," the man protested, "I've

⁶ Sources for the sketch of the editor are many. Principal ones are reports from White, Van Hamm, and O'Neil to Pulitzer, most of them dated 1903; Pulitzer Papers; letters to the author from Lowell Mellett, D. J. McAuliffe (for F. D. White), Roy W. Howard, Herbert Bayard Swope, and Richard L. Stokes. Other impressions of Bovard during his early days as city editor were gleaned from Carlos Hurd, Curtis Betts, F. A. Behymer, and Robert Jones. All of the men served on the staff during those years. ⁷ Mellett to the author, January 10, 1952.

⁸ J. Roy Stockton, "Ed Wray—He's Tops," in *Page One*, 1949, 16. Wray got the job and stayed with it fifty years.

got to live!" "Not necessarily," was Bovard's rejoinder.⁹ Similar in tone was the story of the dismissal of an advance theatrical agent working as a reporter. "I've stood between you and a stage career long enough" was the city editor's comment as he authorized the man's final pay check.¹⁰ The distraught wife of a newsroom Lotherio, hoping to win back her husband's affection, mailed herself poisoned candy. She told police of these "attempts on her life," but under questioning admitted her guilt and confessed her motive. The police beat copy on Bovard's desk identified her as the wife of a *Post-Dispatch* reporter. The city editor simply wrote "former" before "*Post-Dispatch*." The reporter read of his discharge in the afternoon edition.¹¹

Like Chapin, Bovard could make good use of firing as a disciplinary measure. Richard J. "Dick" Collins, the city hall man, allowed himself to be "scooped." Called for an explanation, Collins muttered that he could not be expected to get everything always; he mentioned a previous beat he had scored. Unimpressed, Bovard told him, "You are at the city hall to get every news item. Every day takes care of itself." Collins argued that it was impossible to meet such a requirement, whereupon Bovard discharged him on the spot. A few weeks later the city editor met his recalcitrant reporter still jobless, on the street, and asked him whether he now thought he could get all the news. Collins eagerly agreed that he could, and Bovard rehired him.

Shortly after becoming city editor Bovard plastered the city room walls with the Pulitzer slogan, "TERSE-

⁹ Paul Y. Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *St. Louis Star-Times*, August 1, 1938, p. 3. This anecdote comes from a half-dozen other sources.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Goldfish Bowl*, V (September, 1938), No. 41, p. 3.

NESS, ACCURACY, TERSENESS." He made every effort to see that these standards were lived up to, as far as seemed humanly possible. One writer provoked a pungent reproof when he submitted a composition of fact, fancy, and prophecy, to which he had thoughtfully appended his own by-line. Bovard said, "I have read your composition and I am going to put both you and the *Post-Dispatch* under obligation to me by depositing it here," motioning toward the wastebasket. "You have attached your name to it, I see. Well, writing yourself down as a fool before me doesn't matter much, but you shouldn't advertise yourself in that character. Remember, the paper has a circulation of 150,000." ¹²

As a raw cub, Charles G. Ross was ordered to take a streetcar to a southwestern corner of St. Louis to cover the fall of a painter from a smokestack. The day was hot, and the trip long and involved. Reaching the end of the streetcar line, Ross had to walk some distance. By the time he had found the factory and collected his information, had wended his way back and written his short item, it was late in the day. Bovard glanced over the lines. "Ross, how tall is this smokestack?" The cub could not say. He gave an estimate, recalling that it was "quite tall." "Ross, 'tall' is a relative term. I want you to go back and find out the exact height." Night had fallen by the time Ross returned with the height of the smokestack in feet and inches. He never forgot the lesson, "Get the facts," but he could not remember forty-two years later whether the story was ever used. ¹³

Bovard dispatched another cub, Robert W. Jones, to

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*

the foot of Chouteau Street to cover a fire. Jones boarded a car, but soon discovered it was headed in the wrong direction. He got off and telephoned the city editor to get his bearings, but in the meantime another reporter had called in the fire story. Bovard said, "Mr. Jones, we are getting out a daily newspaper and not a monthly magazine. Come back to the office." Jones was kept waiting a long time—long enough to make him wonder whether this might be his last day on the *Post-Dispatch*. When Bovard looked up from his work, he asked Jones whether he knew how to find his way home.

When Richard L. Stokes came to the staff in 1903, his flair for light feature-writing attracted Bovard's attention. Consequently, Bovard put him on the lead story of the Veiled Prophet's Ball, a large assignment for a beginner. Trying to measure up to the occasion, Stokes employed adjectives profusely. When his masterpiece fell under the keen scrutiny of the chief, the young writer watched to see what impression it was making. Every now and then Bovard would pause to cross out a word. Soon he was slashing right and left. One by one Stokes's cherished adjectives fell under the pencil. He could stand it no longer. "Mr. Bovard, if you cut that, it will bleed!" he pleaded. Bovard did not look up. "We will stanch the flow," he said, and continued cutting out adjectives.¹⁴

Among the more prominent students under Bovard's preceptorship was the publisher's second son, Joseph

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Pulitzer, Jr., whose father sent him to St. Louis in 1906 to learn the business. Although he started his apprenticeship on the business side, he soon became fascinated with the news and editorial departments, and thus came under the tutelage of Johns and Bovard. Within a few months he had a desk in the city room. Bovard gave him reporting assignments, and trained and tested him with practical problems in the news. In time young Pulitzer's suggestions and the stories he brought in became valuable contributions to the paper.

Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., set down his impressions in a diary, which went to his father as a sort of daily report. His random comments revealed a growing respect for the city editor. "Bovard always takes notes [at editorial council meetings], but seldom opens his mouth. He seems to have an ugly disposition, though pleasant and obliging enough to me"; "O'Neil called Bovard down (but mildly) for getting beaten" and "Bovard sulked"; "Bovard gave me a good tip . . . , it's safe to assume that disasters are always exaggerated and swindles or bank failures always minimized"; "Bovard has more brains than anyone in this office." Once Joseph spent a whole day with the city editor. "I watched his work closely and learned much. . . . He's a nice chap with good, honest, fearless views, absolutely independent of everyone apparently, except the public." Bewildered by the mass of things the city editor had to keep in mind, the young man wondered whether he ever forgot something and got into trouble. "'No,' Bovard replied in his silent, indifferent, dry way. 'It wasn't I who got into trouble, it was the paper. I was always cocksure of my-

self.' ” To Bovard's self-analysis Pulitzer added, “He has certainly lost none of that cocksureness!”¹⁵

The following year the elder Pulitzer personally requested Bovard to teach his son all he could about “news instinct,” and to write him frank and honest reports of the young man's progress. By the following summer his pupil was doing so well that Bovard suggested him as the man to fill the city editor's shoes while Bovard himself was on vacation. “His news instinct is keen and broad,” Bovard wrote on July 25, 1908, “unusually well developed.” “Naturally his judgment is immature,” he added frankly. “However, he has always had a ready ear for counsel of more experienced men. . . . In this instance he could appeal to Mr. Bradley or Mr. Johns when confronted with problems beyond his experience. . . . My ignorance of his duties here other than on the editorial floor is my excuse if I wrong him in suggesting he should be more industrious in the pursuit of news. . . .”

When young Joe Pulitzer filled the position with credit, his father was pleased and hastened to cable his congratulations from Wiesbaden. While most of the reports praised his work, Bovard's remarks seem to have been the only ones that struck a sour note. Pulitzer, Sr. wondered whether Bovard was a bit jealous of his son. “It looks that way from his hypocritical [hypercritical] report.”¹⁶ The next day Pulitzer, Sr., wrote his son again: “Ralph [Pulitzer] speaks most enthusiastically

¹⁵ Diary of Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., August 15, November 8, 29, December 13, 1906; January 21, 1907 in Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

¹⁶ Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., to Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., October 3, 1908, *ibid.*

and warmly about your work; White appreciatingly, Williams ditto and only Bovard is cold-bloodedly critical. I personally think altogether too much so." In his careful, minutely detailed letters Bovard had fearlessly set forth young Pulitzer's shortcomings, yet he was generous with credit when he considered it deserved. On November 30, 1910, Bovard wrote, "He is thinking all the time. Joe had the idea of advertising for striking true stories. Drafted an ad offering \$1,000.00 in prizes." Bovard described other ideas; his numerous suggestions on news treatment "on the whole indicated good judgment," the city editor thought.¹⁷ And so the comments went as Pulitzer's skill increased, as experience matured him, and as more responsibility was turned over to him. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., like most of the other Bovard men, came to have a great respect for the city editor. On June 14, 1911, he wrote his father, "Bovard continues to be as industrious and plugging as ever. He has not missed a day or been fifteen minutes late since I have been here. My opinion of him has not changed. . . . My confidence in Bovard is unshaken."

There were others who braved not only successfully but notably the rigors of the Bovard "school of journalism." The first man Bovard employed after assuming his new duties was his old friend, Carlos Hurd, whom he hired away from the *Star* in 1900. Frank A. Behymer, who retired in 1952 after serving the paper for sixty-three years, held many positions on the news staff. Clair Kenamore, who came to the *Post-Dispatch* in 1907 from

¹⁷ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., November 30, 1910, *ibid.*; *id.* to *id.*, April 17, 1911, *ibid.*

the St. Louis *Republic* and Chicago papers, held several editorial assignments but distinguished himself as a war correspondent. His wife, whose pen name was Marguerite Martyn, became one of the few women whom Bovard encouraged to pursue a career in journalism. She became a star writer for the magazine section and for the women's page. Joseph J. McAuliffe's political writing from the state capital eventually earned him the managing editor's post at the *Globe-Democrat*, and he became one of Bovard's contemporary rivals. Curtis Betts started as a cub and soon took over McAuliffe's work in Jefferson City, where he served many years, retiring in 1951. Coming to the *Post-Dispatch* from the Louisville newspapers, Silas Bent soon joined the first faculty of the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1908. After a semester, however, Bovard brought him back as assistant city editor. He brought George W. Eads from the *Star*, and Grattan Kerens from the *Republic*. Both men became outstanding newspaper reporters. H. H. Niemeyer, reporter and sports authority, was brought from New York. Some other writers and artists included Florence J. McCarthy, W. C. McCarty, Chester Ryder, Ripley E. Saunders, Robert Minor, and William Byrns.

Although the *Post-Dispatch* set a fixed ceiling of \$25.00 a week for reporters in the early years of the century, a figure which sometimes caused the city editor the loss of a valuable man, the working conditions generally were as desirable as any in St. Louis. Bovard, however, tried to get the maximum salary changed. One of the most attractive features was the Pulitzer policy

of generous rewards and bonuses. Christmas bonuses ranged from \$50.00 to \$200.00, and a reporter who had done an unusually fine job any time during the year might find on his desk a check for \$20.00 or \$50.00. Pulitzer rewarded his executives with trips to Europe. In 1906 Bovard requested six weeks' leave for a European visit and Pulitzer urged him to take seven weeks and invited the Bovards to visit his Cap Martin villa during that extra week. When Bovard returned, he was given two weeks extra pay with "J. P.'s compliments."

The growing prestige of the *Post-Dispatch* and the Pulitzer system of training were factors which attracted and kept good men. These things contributed to morale and loyalty. Another factor was the training a *Post-Dispatch* reporter got under the city editor. In time, Bovard succeeded in developing a superior news-handling organization out of rough, and often unlettered men. His domineering traits, which first established him as a power in command; his self-confidence, independence and courage; and above all, his journalistic skill were the chief characteristics which he brought to the task. Much of his method was example. He was a ten-to-twelve-hour man, a driver, who often would rather dictate a lead or scribble a headline than entrust it to idle men at his elbow. His decisions involving news judgment drove home lessons of honesty and integrity in journalism. He made few rules, but rules were not called for. Instruction was individual and personal, varying with different reporters as the needs seemed to justify. The raw material of experience was the textbook. Bovard's requirements were clear: Get the news,

get all the news, and get it first. Although his disciplinary methods were often severe, most of the reporters were grateful for the opportunity to learn, and they cherished the experience.

Bovard and the Pulitzer Management

THE ELDER JOSEPH PULITZER, in spite of blindness and semi-invalidism, never gave up active direction of his newspapers. Sheer will power, energy, brilliance, and genius had lifted him, an immigrant, from poverty to eminence in journalism. The fire and spirit with which he drove himself and others had wrecked his health. Although his retirement was publicly announced when blindness first struck him and again announced on his sixtieth birthday in 1907, he continued until his death to be a real force of leadership. He devoted long hours to his work, making his will felt throughout the organization in the persons of secretaries, executives, and managers. Most of his efforts, it is true, were given to his other newspaper property, the *World*, for it was his consuming desire to make that paper a great nationwide influence in American affairs. This emphasis, strengthened by his remarkable success in making the *World* a great newspaper, overshadowed the *Post-Dispatch*, relegating it to second place in his attention and affection. Indeed, a half-dozen times he made overtures to sell his St. Louis paper and once exhorted his managers to run it and quit annoying him about it. Nevertheless, in the last decade of his life, he kept in close

touch with the *Post-Dispatch*. Directives by letter, telegram, and cable came to 210-12 Broadway from wherever the publisher might be living: from his home at Bar Harbor, Maine; from his yacht, the *Liberty*, on the high seas; from his New York residence; from his lodge at Jekyll Island, Georgia; or from his villa at Cap Martin; on the Riviera.

Pulitzer was exacting and often eccentric. His secretaries read the papers to him and took his dictated criticisms. By means of correspondence, extended interviews and conferences, written and oral reports from his lieutenants, the publisher maintained a close surveillance over his papers. His system was designed to test men and to measure their performance. Two or more editors would be pitted against each other in trying out for the same position, and after months of rotating in the work, Pulitzer would appoint the man whose record was best. Editors were commanded to write critical evaluations not only of their subordinates, but also of their colleagues of equal or superior rank. From time to time he sent men from the *World* staff to St. Louis on special missions. Chapin had two such assignments, one of which was reorganizing the *Post-Dispatch* personnel. W. C. Van Hamm, Alfred Butes, and others inspected the *Post-Dispatch* and wrote detailed reports. Such methods resulted in a high level of efficiency.

In such an environment City Editor Bovard's strong will to dominate and his journalistic promise caused him to be the object of jealousy and suspicion among the hierarchy, especially those who felt their positions challenged. As Bovard slowly worked his way up to greater responsibility, his St. Louis superiors and the visiting

Pulitzer emissaries kept a watchful eye on him. Their observations revealed how he was tried and tested and how he weathered the politics, pressures, and petty intrigues that surrounded him.

Rivalry which occasionally waxed bitter kept relations between Bovard and his managing editor, Harry L. Dunlap, in a state of stress. Bovard, who was already in the city editor's seat before Dunlap took his position, may have had some hand in getting the managing editor appointed.¹ Either this factor or his staff seniority gave him a feeling of superiority which he apparently exerted to the fullest. Although the two got along well in the beginning, friction soon arose—first over subjects for news treatment. Dunlap's ideas for constructive campaigning, as for example for the beautification of the city by encouraging garden and flower cultivation, met with passive resistance from the city editor. He bemoaned not only the space but also the time devoted to such material. In sticking to his convictions, however, Bovard tended to ignore the managing editor's suggestions rather than oppose them. He used his staff to carry out his ideas, and when Dunlap urged the execution of his own project, Bovard pleaded that his reporters were too busy on other work.² Such lack of co-operation was one of the reasons why Dunlap expressed his dissatisfaction with the new city editor. Another reason may have been the too thorough coverage given to a Belleville lynching, which resulted in considerable loss of circulation. Certainly, other points which Dunlap argued against Bovard were that same conceit and coldness

¹ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., undated report, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

² *Id.* to *id.*, July 27, 1902, *ibid.*

which made him unpopular with his force. The managing editor gave serious consideration to firing Bovard and replacing him with a more congenial personality.

While Dunlap himself was well grounded in general information and local matters, he appeared to be somewhat overweighted with pride of opinion. He evinced stubbornness in supporting his own conclusions, merely because they were his and regardless of their merits. Like Bovard he seems to have been a man of strong enmities and friendships, and a person who, once determined, would permit no interference. Unlike Bovard, he was conservative in nature, and tried to avoid hurting feelings. Furthermore, Dunlap lacked the personal courage that was one of Bovard's strongest characteristics, and he possessed neither Bovard's judgment of men nor his bloodhound persistency in developing every new idea to the fullest. White's reliable appraisal of the two men as late as 1907 placed greater faith in Bovard. In fact, it was probably White's championing of the young city editor in his reports to Pulitzer that ultimately prevailed against Dunlap's views, with the result that Bovard was not discharged or shifted. White admitted that the city editor was young and undoubtedly had "an attack of megaloccephalitis"; moreover, the "besetting sin on that floor [the newsroom] . . . is conceit. This includes Johns, Dunlap, and Bovard." On the other hand, White cited Bovard's many fine qualities: his industry, honesty, reliability, and news enterprise.³ White told Pulitzer he thought Dunlap's judgment of Bovard wrong—"more a matter of pride of opinion rather than a good estimate."⁴ Eventually, Dunlap changed his mind, ap-

³ *Ibid.*; *id. to id.*, November 3, 1903, *ibid.* ⁴ *Id. to id.*, November 20, 1902, *ibid.*

proved a salary increase for Bovard, and even reported that the city editor was "growing daily," admitting it would be a mistake to change him.⁵ From that time (late in 1902) Bovard's position with the *Post-Dispatch* seems to have been firmly secured.

Although the two editors worked together as a team, their relations seem never to have been close. Just before Dunlap left the paper in 1907, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., noted in his diary that Dunlap and Bovard "waste little love on each other."⁶ It seemed to observers that the aggressive, domineering Bovard ran the entire news department, notwithstanding the fact that Dunlap's area of control and responsibility was considerably greater. Dunlap naturally resented this.

Bovard's other superiors were White, O'Neil, and Johns. White and O'Neil exercised authority over the entire newspaper; Johns, who occupied different positions from time to time, served most of the time as editor of the editorial page (a position on par with Dunlap's). He enjoyed a seniority dating back to 1883, which made him a kind of godfather to all departments on the news-editorial side.

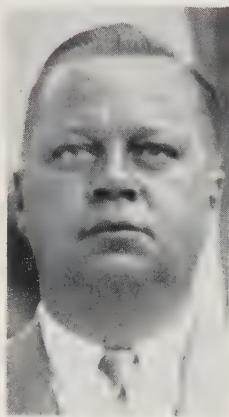
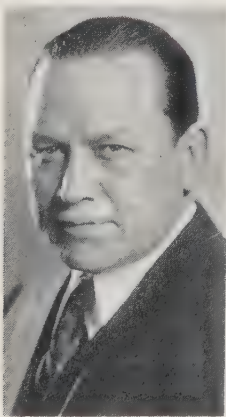
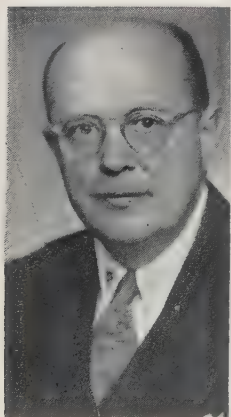
White, as general manager and Pulitzer's personal representative, headquartered in New York. While final policy decisions remained in Pulitzer's hands, White undoubtedly influenced such decisions, and he carried out policy with loyalty and vigor. A quiet, efficient, incisive administrator and a shrewd judge of men, White knew the newspaper business, and had a practiced eye for cutting through surface details to essentials. He had

⁵ Dunlap to *id.*, undated letter, *ibid.*

⁶ Diary of Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., February 12, 1907, *ibid.*



THREE MAKERS OF THE MODERN *POST-DISPATCH*. *Left*, O. K. Bovard, city editor and managing editor; *center*, Joseph Pulitzer II, editor and publisher; *right*, George S. Johns, editor of the editorial page. (Photos, courtesy Wide World Photo, painting by Wayman Adams, and Associated Press Photo.)



MANAGING EDITOR BOVARD'S CHIEF ASSISTANTS. *Left*, Raymond L. Crowley, assistant city editor; *center*, Benjamin Reese, city editor; *right*, Dwight Perrin, assistant managing editor. (Photo of Crowley, courtesy Edwyn Studio.)

unusual ability to effect economies and was hard at driving a bargain. Pulitzer entrusted to him critical and difficult assignments involving delicate personnel adjustments or problems of high finance. White was usually a staunch advocate of Bovard, and in later years became his teacher and friend.

As St. Louis resident manager and trouble shooter, O'Neil had varied duties, but his authority covered all departments. He was responsible only to White and Pulitzer. He served as editorial consultant over Johns, Dunlap, and Bovard. O'Neil's voluminous reports concerning every phase of *Post-Dispatch* operations reveal a great facility of phrase. Too thorough himself to make a bright, competitive newspaper, his greatest value proved to be as a critic and supervisor.

Johns was a conscientious, capable writer of a somewhat belabored style. He was a student of politics. The only man in this group with a college background, he had been a classmate of Woodrow Wilson's at Princeton. He was careful in his handling of facts and fearless as a crusader. Johns was fond of power and jealous of credit for ideas, but his occasional lethargy brought lapses in an otherwise consistently high standard of performance.⁷ O'Neil and Bovard understood each other and got along well, though O'Neil's analyses did not show the understanding and tolerance of the city editor that White's observations reflected. During this period, the relationship of Johns with the city editor seems to have been casual, but not warm. While Johns admired Bo-

⁷ Johns was responsible for many of the *Post-Dispatch* political battles and crusades in the earlier years. See Orrick Johns, *Time of Our Lives* (New York, 1937).

vard's ability, his respect was often tinged with envy. O'Neil and White, on the other hand, were almost unanimous in praise of Bovard's skill and growth; their chief adverse criticisms concerned his personal traits. But these were discounted, because to them unpopularity among his subordinates could be attributed to his position as a taskmaster.

City Editor Bovard and other executives gathered at the Planters' Hotel on April 10, 1907, to commemorate the sixtieth birthday of the founder, who chose the occasion to announce both his retirement and a service and disability pension for employees.⁸ Among some sixty specially invited guests sat Governor Folk, Mayor Wells, David R. Francis, William Marion Reedy, Edward L. Preetorius, and D. M. Houser. Pulitzer, unable to be present, cabled White from Cap Martin the text of his famous pronouncement. It later was adopted and placed in the masthead as the guiding statement of *Post-Dispatch* policy:

I know that my retirement will make no difference in its cardinal principles; that it will always fight for progress and reform, never tolerate injustice or corruption, always fight demagogues of all parties, never belong to any party, always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public welfare; never be satisfied with merely printing the news; always be drastically independent; never be afraid to attack wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty.

Greetings from sixty *World* staff members assembled at Delmonico's to celebrate the same occasion came from Ralph Pulitzer to his brother Joseph, who with the help of Dunlap and Bovard, drafted a reply. Reedy,

⁸ Souvenir program of this occasion, in *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

editor of the weekly *St. Louis Mirror*, a review of literature and criticism, editorially took other St. Louis journals to task for ignoring the affair, and at the same time assessed Pulitzer's contribution to journalism. Pulitzer, "a fighter of swollen plutocracy" and "the first journalist to manifest absolute editorial independence of the counting room," "has rendered stupendous and distinguished service to the people," he wrote; "he has never struck a blow for personal vengeance and vindictiveness. He did not invent yellow journalism. It was he who put red blood into an anæmic institution. . . ." ⁹

Although the retirement meant little more than formality, Bovard's contacts as city editor with Pulitzer himself were infrequent. He dealt mainly with the managers White, O'Neil, Dunlap, and Johns. Between Bovard and Pulitzer, White served as the principal liaison. Probably nothing else shows more clearly Bovard's self-confidence and his utter independence than his contract negotiations with White. Bovard was making \$40.00 a week in early 1904 when White learned from outside sources that the city editor had received an offer of \$75.00 from the *Chicago American*. He immediately wrote Bovard from New York, and in the ensuing correspondence Bovard agreed to sign a two-year contract at \$60.00 weekly, or \$15.00 a week less than he would have received from the Hearst paper.¹⁰ In spite of the

⁹ *St. Louis Mirror*, April 11, 1907, p. 2.

¹⁰ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., June 2, 1904, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

terms of the contract, Bovard was getting \$70.00 the following year and \$80.00 for the next two-year period up to 1908.¹¹ In April, 1906, however, White offered him a contract for 1908 to 1910 at \$90.00. Bovard flatly refused, much to White's surprise, on the ground that he was worth more, or would show that he would be so by 1908. Hence he would not bind himself to a maximum figure. "He respectfully but positively declined it," White wrote;

he, with cool self-assurance, discounted the future in his own favor. He was logical, almost technical and calmly obstinate. He . . . quietly insisted on the provisions relative to determination of contract and freedom in the event of change of management. . . .

I advised him particularly about St. Louis and New York salaries for his own and more important positions. It was without effect. . . . He said he did not care especially to enter into a contract for such a long period ahead, that salary should be paid for capacity, and that it was the employer's look-out that capacity should be fully tested. . . . He simply took the stand that if at that time he was not worth the money and the promotion, it would be so much the fault of the environment that he would not continue with Grasping [*the Post-Dispatch*].

He is frankly apprehensive about his interview with Mr. A. [Andes].¹² I cannot suppress the hope that that apprehension will be justified to some extent. It is hard to find fault with conceit which is to some extent warranted, and where there is real pride in work.

The real difficulty, I think, lies in the fact that the young man was formerly in the Vampire [*Globe-Democrat*] business office,

¹¹ *Id.* to *id.*, undated memorandum, *ibid.* (Other salaries were Johns, \$100.00; A. E. Murphy, Sunday editor, \$75.00; A. G. Lincoln, circulation manager, \$65.00; and James T. Keller, bookkeeper, \$70.00. Also, *id.* to *id.*, April 27, 1906, *ibid.*

¹² Key words were often coded in communications between Pulitzer and his executives. One of Pulitzer's code names was "Mr. Andes." Code for *Post-Dispatch* was "Grasping," and for *Globe-Democrat*, "Vampire." Appropriately enough Bovard's code name was "Gushless." The reference here is to Bovard's anticipated visit with J. P. in Europe.

and continues an improved acquaintance with Chas. McKee, who has doubtless discussed some of his future plans, looking to the retirement of Houser. . . .

White, clearly disappointed at his inability to sign Bovard, lashed out angrily:

I may say that I have talked to Trask, Dunlap and O'Neil with a view of establishing a more thorough organization than is entirely to the taste of a City Editor who hedges himself in with his force, does not take a suggestion, and is miffed by even authoritative interference. . . . I am convinced that if the experiment of Bovard as Managing Editor [during Dunlap's vacation] . . . is made, it is not possible that it will detract anything from the young man's estimate of his value, or rather 'capacity'; the factor he uses in the calculation of his own prospective worth.¹³

The general manager, who usually had nothing but praise for the city editor, was reacting like a Scotsman bested in a deal. Obviously Bovard was one of the few staffmen he could not handle.

Nor could O'Neil handle Bovard. Earlier at White's request, O'Neil had approached the city editor to suggest the advance contract. In reporting no success, O'Neil said, "I have sometimes thought myself possessed of diplomacy and tact, and then again I have doubted it. . . . I am convinced that a bull in a china shop could give me points."¹⁴

Within a very short time Bovard had reason to be pleased with his stand in this matter. A series of major shifts beginning late in the summer of 1907 catapulted him into the acting managing editorship six months later, thus bringing to pass the development he had

¹³ White to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., April 27, 1906, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

¹⁴ O'Neil to White, April 14, 1906, *ibid.*

forecast in his conversations with White. The elder Pulitzer had made up his mind to relieve Johns of the editorial page, and while Horatio Seymour of Chicago was being brought to St. Louis to take over Johns's work, Dunlap resigned under an obscure personal-morals cloud.¹⁵ The inimitable Charles E. Chapin made another of his visits to the *Post-Dispatch* to expedite the changes. Much to Johns's mortification, Seymour was given charge of the editorials, and he found himself "news editor." Johns, who was not very good in news work, longed for his old job in the editorial sanctum; he was given, instead, leave for European travel.¹⁶ White, O'Neil, and Chapin had concurred in the opinion that Bovard was not yet ready for the managing editor's post; the plan was to bring B. E. Bradley, managing editor of the Chicago *Inter Ocean*, to St. Louis for a year, while Bovard gained more experience. So Bovard began work as Bradley's assistant without title; and Joseph N. Adams became acting city editor. Bradley at once recognized Bovard's good qualities, and the two made a fine working team. The arrangement, however, was cut short by O'Neil's death the following January. Thereupon Bradley replaced O'Neil as general manager, and Bovard stepped in as acting managing editor, February 4, 1908.¹⁷

Horatio Seymour said Bovard's appointment was a

¹⁵ He later headed the Washington bureau of the *World*.

¹⁶ Johns eventually went back to his old post as editorial page editor, for Seymour stayed in St. Louis only a few months before being assigned to the *World* as an editorial writer to alternate with the famous Frank I. Cobb.

¹⁷ Seymour to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., February 4, 1908, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

true reward for merit.¹⁸ He pictured the new managing editor as he took over his new duties: "I do not believe that he ever had an ethical consideration in his life. He famishes for news and he goes after it by jumps and leaps. Sometimes we have had to restrain him, but I do not believe we ever convinced him that it was good policy to omit anything." Then Seymour attempted to look into the future. The question remained, he said, whether Bovard would become "a news general or a mere fighter on the line."¹⁹

But Bovard himself, his ambition soaring, was privately irked that his title was only *acting* managing editor. He appeared touchy about it, and when Chester Ryder, who happened to be on a Washington assignment, wrote him a letter addressed to "O. K. Bovard, Managing Editor," Bovard wrote across the envelope, "Not Yet," and mailed it back.

The consensus of White, Seymour, and the others was that Bovard had tremendous potentialities, which needed further broadening and rounding out. It was Seymour's suggestion that a few weeks, or even months, on the *World* would prove of value, but more than a year passed before the situation seem propitious. The purpose at first was to give him further training for his St. Louis position,²⁰ but he soon found himself matched against three *World* men, all competing for the managing editorship of the *World*. Bovard left for New York in the last weeks of 1909 with plans to stay only a

¹⁸ *Ibid.* ¹⁹ *Id.* to *id.*, March 2, 1908, *ibid.*

²⁰ Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., to Ralph Pulitzer, November 27, 1909, Pulitzer Papers, Library of Congress.

month or so, but almost a year passed before he returned to the *Post-Dispatch*.

Pulitzer said that his "strongest wish" was to return Bovard to St. Louis; however, he was looking for a new idea man for the *World*, and Bovard might prove to be such a man. It depended upon whether or not what Pulitzer called a "new suggestive brain" was found, how well Bovard was "promising—not doing," and how well the *Post-Dispatch* got along without him. "We cannot expect too much from a man in a new place except indications . . . of possible or probable growth."²¹

Bovard had been in New York hardly two months, when Pulitzer's plans changed, and he found himself vying with J. J. Spurgeon, and two others for the highest *World* news position. The elder Pulitzer instructed his son Ralph, *World* publisher, who with Seymour had charge of examining and testing, to spend "nine tenths of this time simply on Glorify [Spurgeon] and Gushless [Bovard]," and asked, "WHO PROMISES TO BE THE STRONGEST MAN IN A YEAR FROM NOW?"²²

Bovard's assignment varied. For a time he compared and criticized two *World* rivals, the *American* and the *Times*. For an interval he worked as day managing editor under Spurgeon and as assistant supervisor to Seymour, concentrating on suggestions rather than criticism. Then, he alternated with Charles M. Lincoln, Robert Lyman, and Spurgeon in discharging the duties of managing editor. One day the managing editor was Bovard; next day it was one of the other three. Thus it

²¹ *Id.* to *id.*, December 27, 1909, *ibid.*

²² *Id.* to *id.*, January 31, 1910, *ibid.*

went for months.²³ Ralph Pulitzer and Seymour, who in the meantime also had been transferred to the *World*, directed their work and reported their progress to the elder Pulitzer. The contestants also wrote him their suggestions, and Bovard's ideas seemed to be "average, ordinary, or small." Instead of such relatively minor matters, Pulitzer instructed through Ralph that what he particularly wanted was "talk-making, curate[circulation]-making features, fights and stories of more lasting merit, impressive, big stories that do not end with the day."²⁴ He also wanted Bovard to write him what other *World* men had told him with regard to the kind of newspaper "I should particularly appreciate." "Say this encouragingly," he cautioned Ralph about delivering the message, "but not too much so as he has a very considerable amount of self-admiration and self-conceit already and I don't want him to lose his head quite so soon."²⁵

After nine months of trial and examination the big decision finally came late in the summer of 1910. Bovard was summoned to Chatwold, the Pulitzer home at Bar Harbor, for an interview with the publisher. Pulitzer told him the managing editorship had been given to another, but he was prepared to offer him the second news position on the *World*, probably the title of assistant managing editor. Bovard asked under whom he would work. Pulitzer named one of the competitors, and Bovard promptly refused. He stated his reason plainly: The editor he would have to work under was

²³ Alfred Frueh, as related in a letter from Julian Rammelkamp, March 11, 1951.

²⁴ Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., to Ralph Pulitzer, January 31, 1910, Pulitzer Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵ *Id.* to *id.*, February 12, 1910, *ibid.*

inferior to himself. Pulitzer flew into a rage and accused Bovard of impugning his judgment. The latter stood his ground maintaining that his personal daily association with the man made his own judgment in the matter sounder than his employer's. The publisher, Bovard said, could not competently judge because he had not been present, and if he had, he could not have "seen" the man in action. Pulitzer then commanded him to accept the second *World* spot or return to St. Louis. Bovard said he preferred the *Post-Dispatch* and took his leave. As he neared the gate of Chatwold, Pulitzer sent for him, apologized, and told him, "I differ with your judgment, but I admire your character."²⁶

Bovard was always proud of his conduct on that memorable occasion. He wrote later that he chose to return to St. Louis rather than "play second fiddle" on the *World*. But at the moment he was not sure he would again be permitted to play any fiddle in the Pulitzer organization. "I can always get a job as a copyreader," he told Mrs. Bovard. Norman Thwaites, a Pulitzer secretary, advised him to continue with his usual duties until orders came.

In the next few weeks Pulitzer made several attempts to persuade Bovard to stay in New York. He instructed his son Ralph to tell Bovard he was "plainly foolish" not to stay. If Bovard would promise tact with the staff and with the senior Pulitzer, and also promise "to put his full heart and energy into his

²⁶ The facts related here are substantially as he told them to Mrs. Bovard and several associates.

work," there might be other opportunities to advance him on the *World*. "I am well disposed to appreciate him, educate him," he said.²⁷

But Bovard was not tempted. His mind was made up. One August morning aboard the yacht *Liberty*, Pulitzer commissioned him to return to the *Post-Dispatch* with full and final authority as managing editor and with "increased salary and emoluments." On the *World*, Charles M. Lincoln became managing editor; Lyman, assistant managing editor; and Spurgeon was made editor of the "Bulldog" (early Sunday) edition.

Why did Pulitzer choose Lincoln instead of Bovard? Lincoln may have been better qualified, for he was already a *World* man and thus had the advantage of seniority and experience in New York. Herbert Bayard Swope, who had cubbed under City Editor Bovard in St. Louis and who was now on the *World*, thought that Bovard's news ideas were somewhat provincial. Furthermore, it appeared to Swope that the St. Louis editor spurned stories he did not originate and disparaged New York methods generally—attitudes which conveyed the impression he was inclined to be supercilious.²⁸ There is evidence, however, to support the belief that Bovard's situation on the *World* did not give him a chance to demonstrate his true ability. It was a difficult position for him—a new environment in which he lacked not only the authority he was accustomed to enjoy, but also a knowledge of the city. These factors were aggravated

²⁷ Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., to Ralph Pulitzer, August 12, 1910, Pulitzer Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁸ Herbert Bayard Swope to the author, March 2, 1953.

by the unfriendly attitude of *World* staff members toward an outsider. Bovard's own version, which may reflect some rationalization, was that *World* reporters and editors often sabotaged his efforts; even the printers were in on the conspiracy, botching the copy and making it hard for him to make up the paper on time. On one occasion because of these tactics the paper missed an edition.

Pulitzer's ultimate decision rested to some extent upon secondhand reports, mostly from *World* men who possibly exaggerated Bovard's conceit and overbearing attitude. Pulitzer got the definite impression, which was to some extent justified, that Bovard was too arrogant. It appears, however, that this opinion was based mostly on his St. Louis reputation and not on his conduct while in New York. Alfred Frueh, who worked under Bovard on the *World*, said he never saw him as obstinate or dictatorial. "He wasn't exactly the easy-going sort, but he was not overbearing either. I rather liked and respected him. On the whole I felt the trouble was mostly due to clannishness on the part of the staff."²⁹

Graphically contrasting Bovard's situation at home and on the *World*, in a letter written after Bovard got back to St. Louis, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., gave his father additional insight into the man, and provided a reliable summation of Bovard's New York experience.

Given his own organization and almost absolute authority over that organization and over the news cols., authority in other words such as he has here and never had in New York, and he

²⁹ Alfred Frueh, as related in a letter from Julian Rammelkamp to *id.*, March 18, 1951.

would be very hard to beat. The men that he has made out here work like dogs for him—for he's boss and they know it. In New York there was no boss and they knew it. It's the old story of needing a head, which you have so often complained about. And that I know explains his failure in New York. He did nothing there. On the other hand when you told him to return to St. Louis that August morning in Greenwich on the yacht, you told him to raise the Sunday circulation. He has done it [almost 6,000 increase]. . . . Bovard improved the paper and that's what counts in the end. My confidence in Bovard is unshaken.³⁰

The elder Pulitzer was quoted as saying a little later that Bovard was the strongest man on the news side of the *Post-Dispatch*. Yet, before Bovard left New York, Pulitzer telegraphed his son Ralph three reasons why Bovard was rejected for first place and urged him to convey them to him "carefully, kindly, but plainly." The first two were Bovard's lack of local knowledge generally and lack of appreciation of others. And his third point, reflecting an intuitive, almost ominous foresight, was to echo down the next three decades of *Post-Dispatch* history—an "excessive, premature dangerous love of power."³¹

The story of Bovard's interlude on the *World* would not be complete without a postscript. While the *Post-Dispatch* prospered, the *World* began to decline in the 'twenties and finally was sold in 1931. It is idle speculation to ask the question: Would Bovard have been able to save the *World* had he been persuaded to stay in New York back in 1910? A good case could be made to sup-

³⁰ Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., to Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., June 14, 1911, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

³¹ Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., to Ralph Pulitzer, August 5, 1910, Pulitzer Papers, Library of Congress.

port an affirmative answer from the facts of his later career on the *Post-Dispatch*. But such comparisons are of doubtful value. Bovard's methods were amazingly successful in St. Louis; whether he would have proved equally effective in New York is a question that no one can answer. Nonetheless Bovard's feelings when the *World* came to its untimely end were poured into a "letter to the editor," and they must have been mixed with a measure of satisfaction that his decision had been what it was that August day in 1910. Dating this letter February 28, 1931, Bovard marked it "not for publication," and wrote,

The World fell sick when J. P. died in 1911. The paper really died when Frank Cobb died in 1923. . . . What the World has done since was merely ghost-walking, and finally the ghost has been laid.

.

Among the many injunctions which Pulitzer laid upon his editors the most sapient was "always keep burning the twin lights of common sense and judgment." The World doused those beacons when Cobb's body was carried over the side. He was the last man on the bridge to steer by the chart which the founder left to his successors.

Business conditions and changing competition had no terrors for Pulitzer. He believed and proved that editorial success was followed by business success as certainly as the wake follows the ship. Indeed, he once said he neither needed nor had a business manager; all he required in the counting room was a good book-keeper. But Pulitzer was great—one of the few great editors America has produced.

The voice of his World and Cobb's thundered across the country, and in time of public excitement it was awaited with expectancy. In the days of the ghost World that voice was suc-

ceeded by the clatter of the typewriters of the dilettanti of politics and the wise-cracking columnist. . . .

.

I shed my tear when the World died. Now I can only laugh.

The letter was signed simply "Observer."

Campaigns and Crusades

THE NEXT FEW YEARS were years of empire-building for the managing editor. The death of Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., in 1911 started a gradual dissolution of the *Post-Dispatch's* ties with the *World*. Although by the terms of the will, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., received only one tenth of the annual dividends, the three Pulitzer brothers had equal votes in the family trust. Herbert and Ralph Pulitzer promptly gave Joseph full authority in St. Louis, making him editor and publisher in 1912. He, in turn, left most of the paper's operations in the capable hands of its editors and managers. Thus from the first, Managing Editor Bovard enjoyed a free rein and the complete confidence of the publisher. The paper maintained its afternoon supremacy in St. Louis. Indeed, it was not until after the first World War that the *Globe-Democrat*, by buying the *Republic*, took the city circulation leadership away from the *Post-Dispatch*. Almost always a profitable paper, the *Post-Dispatch* continued to grow, and thus it was that along with practically unlimited control on the news side, Bovard had behind him virtually unlimited resources. Available evidence does not show that Bovard's position was ever at any time threatened.

Power whetting ambition for more power, Bovard proceeded one by one to consolidate under the manag-

ing editor's authority several previously autonomous units related to the news department, but not directly under its supervision. Among these were the daily magazine and the Sunday magazine departments. This process continued until all news, feature, critical, photographic, and artistic content of the paper was being produced under his direction, with all departmental editors responsible to him. Bovard took over everything on the so-called news-editorial side except the editorial page; and though he frequently stormed this bastion, George S. Johns, supported by the Pulitzer principle of strict independence of news and editorial departments, proved able to hold out against him. But in his own domain Bovard ruled firmly, brooking no interference. Heads fell when he met opposition. One of the most often repeated illustrations of his ruthless drive for power concerns Florence J. McCarthy, the city editor who had the courage to resist his chief's prerogative. Determined that McCarthy had to go, Bovard assigned him to insignificant duties, stripping him of real authority by simply bypassing the city desk. McCarthy resigned and had a distinguished career on Chicago Hearst papers. Frederick Smith, head of the copy desk, was another who failed to see eye to eye with the managing editor. After a disagreement, he, too, left the *Post-Dispatch* to make good on the *Chicago Tribune* as its Paris war correspondent.

Next, the managing editor began to blaze new trails in national and international news fields, just as he had developed local news in his city editor days. Pulitzer never seemed to have thought of the *Post-Dispatch* as other than local in scope, purposely restricting it to St.

Louis and surrounding areas and insisting that leadership in national affairs be left to the *World*.¹ The impact of international war, accentuated by America's entry, caused Bovard with his usual alert news sense to see the rising importance to the average reader of news of world developments.

Also the *Post-Dispatch* traditionally relied upon the correspondents of the *World* and the wire services for its budget of news from outside its own territory. Washington coverage depended on the *World's* overnight wire from the capital.² But Bovard wanted the news firsthand. Syndicates, and press services generally, with their search for the common denominator of editorial tastes and with their treatment of the surface news for universal consumption, became his despair.³ Wartime confusion and the unreliable facilities for transmission of information made the service still more unsatisfactory to him. Accordingly, his sending Clair Kenamore to Mexico marked a turning point in the paper's history⁴—the beginning of a growing national-mindedness and along with it increased independence of *World* facilities. Kenamore accompanied General Pershing's troops in search of the bandit, Francisco Villa. Afterwards he became the *Post-Dispatch's* first correspondent-at-large covering the engagements of the Thirty-fifth Division in France. This was the beginning of a Bovard policy which brought to readers firsthand

¹ Florence D. White to Frank O'Neil, December 19, 1904, Pulitzer Papers, Columbia University.

² *P-D Notebook*, July, 1952, p. 7.

³ Paul Y. Anderson, "The Greatest Managing Editor," in *The Nation*, CXLVII (August 13, 1938), No. 147, p. 42.

⁴ Samuel W. Tait, Jr., "The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*," in *The American Mercury*, XXII (April, 1931), No. 88, p. 404.

reports from afar. It was a policy which, within a decade, lifted the *Post-Dispatch* from its provincial zone of influence to a position of national prominence.

Bovard also saw the growing importance of Washington as a news center, and his second step in expanding the geographical range of the paper's coverage was the establishment in 1918 of the Washington bureau. He appointed Charles G. Ross chief of the bureau, and later Ross was joined by Paul Y. Anderson and Raymond P. Brandt. Ross's job at first was to gather news items about St. Louis and Missouri, rather than to cover the national scene. After 1920 the news of national scope increased and there was a trend to fewer, shorter items. Ross, assisted by Curtis Betts, state political writer, covered the 1920 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. After this, Ross's first by-lined stories on interpretative pieces and profiles of Missourians began to appear in the *Post-Dispatch*.⁵

The bureau became Bovard's special delight and a project into which he poured time and energy. It became the *Post-Dispatch*'s long arm, especially useful for its investigation of the oil scandals and malpractices of Federal Judge George W. English. It was the Teapot Dome affair that first awakened Bovard to the possibilities of waging public service campaigns on a national scale. The first effort at crusading on a wider scale was successful when the paper won its first nationwide effort, a vigorous and idealistic campaign to secure pardon for political prisoners who were still serving federal penitentiary terms for wartime violation of the Espionage Act. Freedom of speech to the *Post-Dispatch*

⁵ P-D Notebook, July, 1952, p. 7.

meant freedom for all. Anderson did the field work, and the crusade came to a climax on Christmas day, 1921, when President Harding's pardons gave twenty-four men their freedom.⁶

Soon after the first intimations of Teapot Dome and Elk Hills appeared in the news, Bovard's trained senses, attuned to hints of political scandal, enabled him to assess accurately their importance before most other editors did. Bovard assigned Anderson to cover carefully the hearings of the Walsh investigating committee, and for weeks Anderson was the only newsman present.⁷ While the *Post-Dispatch* gave the inquiry sympathetic attention, some other leading dailies sought to belittle Senator T. J. Walsh's efforts and discredit his motives.⁸ Senator George W. Norris declared that no betrayal of the public trust resisted exposure and punishment more tenaciously than did the scandals.⁹ But as the ugly details gradually unfolded, their significance became more apparent, and they gained more of the country's front-page space.

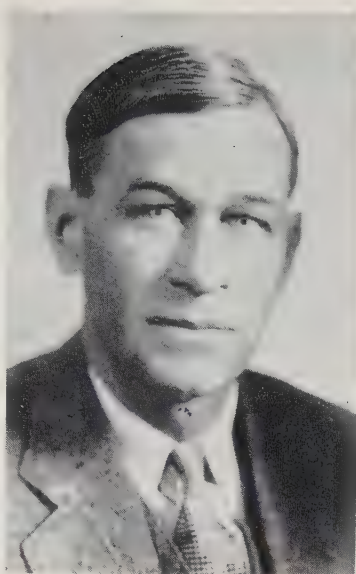
The scandals concerned the leasing to private oil companies of naval oil reserves on public lands, chiefly at Teapot Dome, Nevada, and Elk Hills, California. Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall secretly leased Teapot Dome to Harry F. Sinclair's Mammoth Oil

⁶ *Post-Dispatch*, December 7, 8, and 23, 1921; Ross and Hurd, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 ff.

⁷ Roger Butterfield, "The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*—Pulitzer's Prize," in *Collier's*, CXXXVI (December 16, 1950), No. 25, p. 80.

⁸ Irving Dilliard, "Congressional Investigations: The Role of the Press," in *University of Chicago Law Review*, XVIII (Spring, 1951) No. 3, 589. See also Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York, 1931), 154-58, for a picture of the apathetic response from the public and the press.

⁹ George W. Norris, *Fighting Liberal* (New York, 1945), 224.



FOUR GREAT REPORTERS who received their training under O. K. Bovard. *Top, left, Raymond P. Brandt; right, Charles G. Ross; bottom, left, Marquis Childs; right, Paul Y. Anderson.* (Photos of Childs and Ross, courtesy Harris and Ewing; that of Brandt, courtesy St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*.)

Company and Elk Hills to Edward L. Doheny's American Oil Company. Sinclair was associated in a group of oil company executives who had organized a "dummy" corporation under Canadian law, the Continental Trading Company, Limited, solely for the purpose of buying and selling large quantities of oil. As thousands poured in from this enterprise, the money was invested in Liberty bonds which were turned over to the members. Meanwhile, both Doheny and Sinclair, in return for their leases, transferred to Fall and his son-in-law more than \$300,000.00 in the Continental's Liberty bonds and in cash.

When Sinclair tried to take up his lease, he found the Mutual Oil Company already working Teapot Dome, but his Cabinet-member friend Fall succeeded in getting the Mutual ejected to make way for his company.

The use of Marine forces to evacuate Teapot Dome as reported in the *Post-Dispatch* of July 29, 1922, provided Bovard with what he called a "news nugget." He noticed a letter to the editor, signed "R. C." which questioned such unwarranted action. He learned from the editorial department that the letter had been written by Raymond L. Crowley, a new man on the news staff, and Crowley told him where he got his information. Bovard thanked him for a good idea; then he went to the telephone, called Anderson in Washington, and ordered him into the case.

While the Senate inquiries dragged on, Fall, Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby, and Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty, under public censure, retired from the Cabinet; Harding died. The Continental

Trading Company sold its contract to Sinclair and Prairie and destroyed its records. When the Senate investigations had established the facts of the conspiracy, the government instituted a series of suits to regain control. Eventually the Supreme Court canceled the Doheny and Sinclair leases as "fraudulently made by means of collusion and conspiracy." The Court said the Continental was organized for some illegitimate purpose, and condemned Fall as faithless to his public trust. The decision restored to the government an estimated \$400,000,000.00 worth of oil lands.

As the result of the criminal prosecutions, Fall was found guilty of accepting a bribe and was sentenced to a year in prison. Though Sinclair and Doheny were acquitted, Sinclair had to serve prison terms for both contempt of court and contempt of the Senate. Thus, what might be called the first phase of the oil scandals came to an end. Bovard and the *Post-Dispatch* were given credit for first recognizing and treating the affair as a news event of serious proportions, although, as during the Traction scandals of twenty-five years earlier, the paper was in the beginning criticized for trying to blacken the reputations of "high-minded" and "patriotic" citizens. Senator Walsh wrote that the *Post-Dispatch* was one of the few journals that realized the importance of the oil deals and took a stand against them long before their more sensational aspects came out.¹⁰

But certain gaps in the details of the oil story remained mysteriously unexplained. Bovard re-examined the reported facts of the now five-year-old affair. The

¹⁰ Cited in Ross and Hurd, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10.

Continental Trading Company had invested more than \$3,000,000.00 in Liberty bonds, the Roberts-Pomerene prosecutions revealed. About \$230,000.00 worth of these had found their way to Secretary Fall. What became of the remaining bonds, amounting to more than \$2,770,000.00? Harry Sinclair, Sidney E. Blackmer of the Midwest Oil Company, Robert W. Stewart, chairman of the board of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, and James E. O'Neil of the Prairie Oil Company had participated in the transaction; and it seemed to Bovard that these men could furnish a clue to the mystery. Obviously the investigation should be reopened. The managing editor assigned Anderson to find out whether the government contemplated further inquiries to answer this question.¹¹

Anderson soon learned that nobody was making the slightest effort to uncover what happened to the bonds. His inquiries led him to Attorney General John G. Sargent, who, it seemed, could not understand why Anderson thought the Department of Justice should interest itself in tracing the bonds. The Supreme Court found that the Continental's purpose was bribery of Cabinet officers, Anderson argued. "Isn't it reasonable to suspect that the rest of the fund has also been used for corruption?" His point being ignored by the Attorney General, Anderson wrote his famous "Who Got the Bonds?" story, published in the *Post-Dispatch*, November 12, 1927, which raised the question as to the whereabouts of the bonds and described the interview with Sargent.

¹¹ Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*, 3. Anderson wrote, "I was sent on that hunt by Bovard after he had noted in one of my stories that the destination of the bonds was still a mystery."

Anderson's next move was to see Senator Walsh, to point out that there seemed little likelihood of an investigation unless the Senate undertook it. He urged Walsh to introduce the resolution, but the famous old fighter flatly refused. He was tired of having his motives criticized as they had been throughout the oil investigations, he declared. Despite his hard work and success, the newspapers and the politicians of the opposition party had consistently abused him as a muckraker and a sensationalist trying to exploit the oil scandals for his own political advancement. He had no doubt that were he to introduce such a resolution, he would be charged with aiming at a Presidential nomination. "To tell the truth," said Anderson, "it was hard to blame him." The reporter did get Walsh's promise to take charge, should the Senate order an investigation.

Anderson finally persuaded his friend, Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska, to agree to introduce the matter; but Norris wanted first to give President Coolidge plenty of time to order his Department of Justice into the investigation. Whereupon the *Post-Dispatch* published Anderson's interview with Norris, outlining the arguments for an inquiry. This was followed by a second story in which Norris declared that should the President fail to act, he would bring the question before the Senate. No action came from the White House, Norris' resolution received unanimous Senate approval in January, 1928, and Walsh's Public Lands Committee began its work.¹²

¹² Paul Y. Anderson, in *Editor and Publisher*, LXI (May 18, 1929), No. 52, and in the *Post-Dispatch*, June 5, 1929, described his efforts to get the investigation reopened.

The inquiry disclosed that the bonds had been divided among Blackmer, O'Neil, Stewart, and Sinclair, who had disposed of them in various ways. Sinclair, however, had kept his share in his home vault until he made his payments to Fall; then—and this testimony made news—he had “lent” \$145,000.00 and given \$75,000.00 more to the Republican National Committee! The Republican chairman, Will Hays, had used the bonds to pay some of the expenses of the 1920 campaign.

Paul Y. Anderson, whose journalistic efforts induced the Senate to reopen the case, played a key hand in the investigation. It was said that he first wrote many of the questions used by the Senate committee in questioning witnesses.¹³ Anderson was awarded the Pulitzer Prize of 1929 for the best example of a reporter's work.

Anderson was one of the great reporters developed by Bovard. Prominent among his talents was a strong skepticism of human motives, especially those of public officials, the same sense of skepticism, indeed, that formed part of Bovard's make-up. And the latter seems to have found in Anderson a kindred spirit. As a poor boy, Anderson had to make his own way. He got into journalism as a copy boy on the *Knoxville Journal*, and became its reporter at the age of seventeen. When he came to the *Post-Dispatch*, Bovard put him to exposing official corruption in East St. Louis. His work exposed him to threats from gamblers and police who were implicated.¹⁴ In the East St. Louis race riots of 1917, young Anderson witnessed the murder of eighteen Negroes and whites, boldly stalked to a hotel to wash off

¹³ *Time*, XXIV (August 13, 1934), No. 7, p. 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXXI (January 31, 1938), No. 5, p. 28.

the blood, then started to write evidence which eventually helped send twenty leaders to prison. A Congressional committee investigating the riots cited the reporter for his bravery.¹⁵ During the war hysteria of 1918, a Collinsville, Illinois, mob lynched a German miner. Anderson obtained the mob leader's confession, which, repeated before a coroner's jury, led to his trial for murder.

For a time Anderson plodded along halfheartedly at features, occupying a desk next to that of Richard Stokes. The two reporters collaborated on a column called "Sound and Fury," Stokes contributing the sound and Anderson the fury. Stokes told Bovard, "You've got a race horse in Anderson, but you've got him doing a plow horse's work." A turn at editorial writing proved equally unsatisfactory for Anderson. He longed for the excitement of a reporter's life. His assignment to the Washington bureau eventually brought into play his greatest talents. In later years he received \$16,000.00 a year, one of the highest salaries ever paid a reporter. Bovard would send him to other parts of the country when big news broke. He covered the Loeb-Leopold murder trial in Chicago, and the Seabury investigations in New York. In his opinion, the best story he ever handled broke during the Scopes trial at Dayton, Tennessee. The profound and elemental subject, the characters of William J. Bryan and Clarence Darrow, the backwoods setting—all contributed to a theme, he believed, of enormous appeal.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Editor and Publisher*, LXI (May 18, 1929), No. 52, p. 10.

¹⁶ Leslie Erhardt, "Anderson of the *Post-Dispatch*," in *The Quill*, XXIII (April, 1935), No. 24, p. 9.

While Anderson's brilliant reporting and writing continued for years, he led an emotionally stormy private life. He was really a very sensitive man underneath his blasé exterior, and a degree of immaturity hampered his ability to make a successful adjustment. Once he had found himself compelled to apply for work to the wealthy uncle for whom he had been named. When the uncle refused to hire him, Paul Anderson added the initial "Y" in his name, so that no one would ever confuse him with the hated relative. His divorces, remarriages, and alcoholism were symptoms of unbalance. He did not drink all of the time, but his occasional binges became more frequent and prolonged.

But Anderson really hated hypocrisy and pretense as much as he loved public righteousness. The Dies Committee's use of "smear" tactics to imply findings not supported by evidence, greatly disturbed him. The success of this and other propaganda devices generally caused him to doubt his confidence in the integrity and usefulness of his profession and to wonder whether democracy was able to cope with such methods.¹⁷ Yet his courage, his zeal, and his skepticism made him, Oswald G. Villard thought, the greatest detective-reporter. "He not only went after the facts—others did that—but he searched until he found the truth behind the facts. That made him the unbeatable reporter that he was. And the excitement of the chase and of the exposure gave his work the verve, the clarity, and the fervor that distinguished it."¹⁸

His alcoholism finally got out of hand, and Bovard,

¹⁷ See Winifred Johnston (ed.), *Where Is There Another? A Memorial to Paul Y. Anderson* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1939).

¹⁸ Cited, *ibid.*, 15-16.

whom he idolized, felt compelled to fire him. He made a sincere comeback, handling Washington correspondence for the St. Louis *Star-Times* and writing for *The Nation*; but within less than a year, he took his own life in 1938 when he was forty-five.

From the President's Cabinet, crime and lawlessness seemed to seep down into every area of national life, fed by prosperity, speculation, and prohibition in the 'twenties and later by depression and crime-pervaded politics. In business it manifested itself in lobbying, false securities, and the creation of combines. Bootleg liquor, speak-easies, gambling, murder, robbery, and gangsterism characterized the underworld, which sought to corrupt government. Utilities and big industries sought special favors from politicians, bosses, and public officials. The international tensions which occupied the headlines of the 'thirties and 'forties had not yet developed, and crime provided interesting newspaper reading. It was so rampant that a reporter did not need special abilities or experience to find plenty of news material.

Crime was an old story for Bovard. Besides Anderson, he had on his staff a man whom he had trained and whom the *Post-Dispatch* staff believes to have been its greatest crime reporter—John T. Rogers. Rogers and Bovard were the smooth working team that unravelled the intricate ramifications of unsolved crimes and brought punishment to the guilty. The two men would together develop a theory—perhaps concerning the un-

derworld's next move, or maybe explaining certain developments. Then Rogers would go out on assignment. "Take a week, a month, or a year," Bovard would say. "Do nothing else. Devote all of your time to this investigation. Draw upon the cashier for your expenses." Few reporters ever had such assignments. Few ever enjoyed the implicit trust Bovard placed in Rogers. One such assignment resulted in complete and total failure; Rogers brought back nothing after much time and expense. But this was an exception in Rogers' career. Ordinarily, life for him seldom held a dull moment, and his efforts were amazingly successful. What appeared to other reporters to be fabulous news breaks awaited him more frequently than chance could account for. A certain almost bloodhound-like skill and instinct brought him to the right place at the right time. It was not always luck that such fortunate breaks came his way.¹⁹

Another faculty that made Rogers a great reporter was his persuasiveness. He arrived in St. Louis in 1916 after working as a telegraph operator and reporter in Louisville and Kansas City. Bovard had given strict orders that no more job-seekers were to be admitted. But Rogers' facile speech got him past the third-floor receptionist. He was seeking a job in much the same way he hunted a man or haunted a news beat, and with equal success.

Rogers had the hortatory manner of a revivalist which gave him a sort of compelling power over persons on the fringes of the law. Crime suspects would refuse to talk to officers, but would willingly confess to Rogers. Suggesting prayer, or any symbol that might

¹⁹ Sam Shelton, "The Unbeatable Rogers," in *Page One*, 1948, 15.

nudge the conscience, he convinced his man that confession and full honesty would be for his own good. Like a ward heeler, when he learned that some underworld character had been arrested, he befriended the wife and children. He carried messages, bought groceries, took the children to school, or paid the rent. Such favors were not soon forgotten. He gained a reputation as a fair, true friend of the underworld. And so it became office tradition that Rogers was the man to get people to talk when they would talk to no one else. Time after time, when the key to a big story was being diligently sought by St. Louis reporters, Rogers found the right person and won his confidence, or that person came to Rogers.²⁰

Rogers' journalistic achievements, however fascinating, are too voluminous to narrate here. The beat which brought him greatest acclaim from other newsmen was the confession of Art Newman, which resulted in the hanging of Charlie Birger, thus bringing to an end a long period of southern Illinois gangsterism.²¹ In one of his more risky exploits, Rogers uncovered the kidnaping and murder of two war-veteran planters of Mer Rouge, Louisiana. He was warned to get out of town and was shot at from ambush before he finally led state police to discover the bodies at the bottom of Bayou Lafourche and traced the guilt to Klansmen.²²

Another Rogers exposé received national attention when it removed the halo which wide publicity had placed on the brow of Jake Lingle, Chicago *Tribune* reporter and victim of a gang murder. Lingle had been

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Butterfield, "The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*, 27.

²² Walter Howey (ed.), *Fighting Editors* (Philadelphia, 1948), 71-77.

pictured as a martyr in the cause of press freedom. Rogers' detective work bared his double life, broke through the silence of Chicago newspapers, and revealed Lingle as the racketeer, the "fixer" for police characters, and the reporter who used his *Tribune* job to help other racketeers.²³

The work which earned for Rogers the Pulitzer Prize in 1927 was the exposure of the malpractices of Federal Judge George W. English, who was forced to resign just before he was to be tried before the Senate for impeachment. Rumors reaching Bovard's ear indicated that the judge for years had operated a tight little judicial despotism. So in October, 1924, Bovard assigned John Rogers, Ray Webster, and Samuel A. O'Neal to gather all evidence possible, quietly and without arousing suspicion. In the meantime, he put Anderson and Ross to work on the Washington angles. The exposé broke on January 8, 1925, with the publication of the first of a series of extensive articles reviewing the official acts of Judge English. This was followed next day by disclosures under Anderson's and Ross's by-lines that both the Department of Justice and the House Judiciary Committee had before them complaints of a "bankruptcy ring" in Judge English's jurisdiction, the southern Illinois federal district. In the typically thorough manner of the *Post-Dispatch*, Raymond P. Brandt, another of the Washington bureau men, outlined the methods of impeachment of a federal judge and gave the case histories of six judges who previously

²³ Jack Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," in *The Saturday Evening Post*, CCXI (January 14, 1939), No. 29, p. 6; Butterfield, "The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*, 77.

had been so tried or accused. The next day the *Post-Dispatch* editorially demanded investigation of the charges. While the paper was preparing evidence with which to bring its own specific charges and while a bill was being introduced in the House calling for an investigation, Bovard fell ill with appendicitis. Peritonitis followed surgery, and his condition became critical; but Joseph Pulitzer II came to his hospital bedside and asked him to make the final decision as to whether or not to continue the campaign. After asking a few questions Bovard told him, "Hop to it. You have what you need."

On January 14, the *Post-Dispatch* published its own charges—substantially those officially made months later by the Congressional committee after a series of hearings.

In spite of the prestige of a federal judge and at the risk of accusations of libel and contempt, Bovard had already published most of his charges and placed at the disposal of the committee all of the evidence the *Post-Dispatch* had gathered. The House of Representatives approved the report, voting 300 to 60 for impeachment, and referred the case to the Senate for trial with 9 House members as prosecutors. The trial date was set for November 10, 1926, but just six days before he was to be tried, Judge English resigned.²⁴

The *Post-Dispatch* awarded \$1,000.00 for the Washington correspondent side of the case, and this award was divided equally between Ross and Anderson. It also presented Rogers with an additional \$1,000.00 for his work.

²⁴ See *Post-Dispatch*, January 8, 9, March, July, November, 1925, *passim*.

In keeping a vigilant eye on the national government and on foreign developments, Bovard did not overlook his own backyard, a lucrative field for journalistic exposure of crime and corruption. The fabulous Kelley case, with its manifold ramifications, was one of the most unusual crime stories in which any newspaper ever became involved. The registration frauds exposure and the public utilities investigations were two other campaigns in which Bovard, as general, laid down the broad strategy, outlined the tactics, and directed the fight.

The most complicated series of circumstances beginning with an outbreak of kidnappings in 1931 and ending in 1936 with the conviction of Mrs. Nellie Tipton Muench and her accomplices, challenged the well-tryed talents of Bovard, Rogers, Sam Shelton, Spencer McCulloch, Ray Webster, and a half-dozen other *Post-Dispatch* men, as indeed, those of reporters on the other St. Louis journals.

On the rainy, stormy night of April 20, 1931, Dr. I. D. Kelley, wealthy and widely known nose and throat specialist, was lured from his home by a professional call. He did not return, and his car was found abandoned several miles from the fashionable neighborhood to which he had been called. By anonymous telephone calls and notes left in a country mailbox, the kidnapers demanded first \$250,000.00, then lowered their sights to \$100,000.00. But the abductors, fearing detection, became skittish, and as time passed it began to appear that no satisfactory contact could be made with the family to receive the ransom money. Suspense mounted, as every newspaper had its best reporters working on the

case, and as the police covered seven counties, questioning every possible suspect. The *Post-Dispatch* cried, "Wake Up, St. Louis!"

Eight days passed without progress. Finally, in the early morning hours of April 29, John Rogers received a telephone call at his home in Vandeventer Place. He was instructed by an unidentified voice to meet a friend at the corner of Grand Boulevard and Finney Avenue. He was to stand there until a car came by flashing its headlights. Following directions, Rogers made the contact, got into the car driven by a man who slid over, motioned to the driver's seat, and told him to drive. Rogers headed the automobile through North St. Louis streets, across the Mississippi, and finally out on a country road in the outskirts of East St. Louis.

"This is a pretty lonely place," Rogers ventured.

"That's all right; I've got two guns and plenty of ammunition," he was reassured by his companion. The man took out the revolvers and laid them on his lap, not menacingly but protectively. In a few minutes he pointed out an abandoned filling station. "Stop there," he said. "Your friend is waiting."

"Who?"

"Dr. Kelley. Take him in. Turn back, and take him home."

Once again a sensational story had been placed in Rogers' hands, and he knew what to do with it. Kelley was willing to wait till morning to notify police and his family; so he accepted Rogers' invitation to go to the reporter's home to bathe, shave, rest, and talk. In those hours before dawn Managing Editor Bovard, City Editor Ben Reese, stenographers, and photographers

gathered at the Rogers' home. While the doctor told his story, stenographers recorded it and Rogers wrote. More than two hours later Rogers turned Dr. Kelley over to William Orthwein II, Mrs. Kelley's brother-in-law, who was acting for the family. At 9:55 A.M. a *Post-Dispatch* extra was out.²⁵

It was incredible that the doctor had been surrendered without payment of ransom. Orthwein, ready to pay, took the matter up with Rogers. "How about it? How much do we owe you?"

"Not a red cent," said Rogers.

"You didn't pay any ransom?"

"I had no money."

"Did you get it from the *Post-Dispatch*?"

"Hell, no."

"You mean we don't owe anything at all to anybody?"

"No," replied Rogers.

The fact that no ransom had been paid was confirmed by Joseph Pulitzer II, the publisher, in a public statement. "Neither was a penny paid, promised, loaned, or advanced by the *Post-Dispatch* for the story or pictures."²⁶ A bulletin board notice in the newsroom announced the award of a year's salary to Rogers. Bonuses went to other staff members who had worked on the case.

The kidnapers of Dr. Kelley went free for a long time. It was not until February 8, 1934, almost four years later, that the *Post-Dispatch* in two exclusive,

²⁵ Shelton, "The Unbeatable Rogers," *loc. cit.*, 15; see also Rogers' first person account, *Post-Dispatch*, April 29, 1931, pp. 1, 6.

²⁶ *Post-Dispatch*, May 3, 1931.

copyrighted stories published the statement of Adolph Fiedler, which resulted in the indictment of four men and one woman for the crime. According to Fiedler, the woman, an attractive red-haired dress shop proprietor and wife of a prominent physician, had analyzed the desirability of prospective victims and devised a plausible scheme by which the doctor had been persuaded to leave his home on that dreary April night. The crime had been planned—and partially executed—in Fiedler's recreation parlor on Olive Street. In the trials which followed, three of the men were convicted and sent to prison; the fourth, who turned state's evidence, was murdered.²⁷

But the fate of the attractive woman, Mrs. Nellie Tipton Muench, was different. She employed a battery of lawyers and began a last-ditch defense. The particular objects of her hatred were the *Post-Dispatch* and C. Arthur Anderson, the prosecuting attorney of St. Louis County. At one time during the disclosures, Bovard's life was threatened, and Anderson received an injury which crippled him for life when his car was mysteriously forced off the highway. At the hospital Bovard sat with Anderson, and when it appeared the emergency treatment had not been correct, the managing editor called a noted bone specialist and later, when the *Post-Dispatch* refused to pay the bill, wrote his personal check of \$1,000.00 for the doctor's services. "You know, Arthur," Bovard told him, "if I hadn't got you into this, you wouldn't have been hurt."²⁸

Because Mrs. Muench named the *Post-Dispatch* as

²⁷ *Ibid.*, September 27–November 31, 1934, January 24–31, February 25, 1935.

²⁸ Harold T. Meek to the author, January 14, 1952.

a prejudicial factor, Bovard and other officers of the paper were brought into court during the hearing on her petition for a change of venue. The managing editor was forced by *subpoena duces tecum* to bring into court the famous Bunsen report, a mass of data concerning the kidnaping, mostly unverified and some of it defamatory. The report had been collected by a citizen's crime investigating body in an effort to be helpful to the state. Although the report was rejected by the court as not bearing on the question at hand, the defense insisted upon reading it to a court stenographer for the purpose of appeal. Also figuring prominently in the hearing was the testimony of J. T. Keller, treasurer, whose office records revealed that the Pulitzer Publishing Company had paid Fiedler \$9,675.00 from January 8 to June 17, 1934.²⁹

Mrs. Muench won a change of venue and her trial was set for September 30 at the Audrain County courthouse, Mexico, Missouri. Before this time, however, the *Post-Dispatch*, with the *Star-Times* trailing close behind, began to unravel a complicated plot conceived by Mrs. Muench. In the shock of this new hoax, the original crime was all but forgotten. Bovard directed the staff work, and his persistence was matched by the stubbornness of Mrs. Muench and her accomplices. Mrs. Muench, childless and past forty, claimed to have given birth to a son on August 18, and she promptly announced the arrival as a "gift from God." In a long maze of detailed investigations the *Post-Dispatch* identified the child as that of an unwed Pennsylvania servant girl who had been brought to St. Louis before the birth so that the

²⁹ St. Louis *Star-Times*, June 19, 1935.

baby might be adopted by the Muenches, who, still claiming the infant as their own, naturally declined to make the adoption official.³⁰ One motive was clear: Mrs. Muench was posing motherhood to play upon the sympathy of the Audrain County jury and, of course, the public as well. But before Bovard was ready to brand the baby hoax with its true name, he sought one more convincing, more damaging motive—was the child being used as blackmail?

H. T. Meek realized one day at the copy desk that Bovard had written defamatory insertions into the story. He took the copy to the managing editor, pointing out several obvious libels. Bovard told him they were intentional, that he had deliberately written them hoping they would make Mrs. Muench angry enough to sue. "It's all true and we can prove it," he said, "so she would not have a case, but it would give us a chance to bring out in court all the evidence we have against her." Mrs. Muench did not sue.

Just two days before Mrs. Muench was to go on trial for the Kelley kidnaping, Sam Shelton, a *Post-Dispatch* reporter, found the man Mrs. Muench had blackmailed, a prominent and wealthy bachelor physician in his fifties. He told the paper he had paid Mrs. Muench \$18,000.00 after she had convinced him that he was the father of her child. He had advanced all the money to finance her defense, but now he doubted that she had ever borne a child.

On October 5, the jury acquitted the doctor's wife of the kidnaping charge. Ten days later, when habeas

³⁰ See *Post-Dispatch*, September 14-30, 1935; *St. Louis Star-Times*, September 17-30, 1935.

corpus proceedings opened in Clayton for recovery of the child, the *Post-Dispatch*'s exposure was complete. Only the identity of the nurse who removed the child from the midwife's house to the Muench home was yet to be revealed. The Clayton court ordered the Muenches to give up the baby, but they did so only after their appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court had been denied. Subsequently, Dr. and Mrs. Muench and two accomplices were convicted of mail fraud and sentenced to terms up to ten years in federal prison.

In part of the litigation, counsel for Mrs. Muench charged that the *Post-Dispatch* was one of the "inciters" of the proceedings, that it was an "undisclosed principal," and that fees for counsel were being provided by both the Pulitzer paper and the *Star-Times*. Frequent references were made to charges of "trial by newspapers," "barratry," and "champerty." The presence of representatives of both newspapers at the counsel table and on the witness stand was also noted. The *Post-Dispatch* answered these charges, explaining objectively the roles of both newspapers in the case. It admitted its intensive investigation of the hoax and its financial support of prosecuting attorney Anderson's work, but it maintained it had never withheld any facts from the authorities. The paper's purpose was solely to assist the law in bringing justice to bear on the case and not to impede those processes for a story.³¹

With sensation after sensation breaking almost daily, the hoax news must have set some sort of record for sustained reader interest. From the time the Fiedler story broke until the case ended, the *Post-Dispatch* devoted

³¹ *Post-Dispatch*, October 25, 1935, p. 10A.

more than one million words and many columns of pictures to the running account. For a time it was bringing out almost every day one or more exclusive, copyrighted stories. There seems to be little doubt that had it not been for the paper's efforts, the crime would still be unsolved.

Scarcely nine months later Bovard and the staff were busy exposing widespread city vote registration frauds in a crusade that served as a classic example of Bovard's thoroughness. The exposés started in July of 1936 and followed an arduous canvass by a large segment of the staff. The June preprimary revision of lists of registered voters, a process which usually reduces the number, attracted attention because the revised lists showed the largest increase ever before recorded. This called for explanation, but a thorough investigation was not possible until the precinct lists could be printed. The *Post-Dispatch* in the meantime had been informed that the lists had been padded, canvassers having purposely failed to strike off names of voters who had moved or died since the previous registration period. The principal lead for the paper came from the Citizen's Nonpartisan Committee, a small, militant civic organization, headed by a former *Post-Dispatch* reporter. This man had covered three precincts in the river wards, and his findings showed many persons registered at unoccupied addresses. City Editor Ben Reese agreed to buy his information and his services in accompanying *Post-Dispatch* reporters assigned to verify his discoveries. After frauds

were verified in these three precincts, reporters checked suspicious precincts elsewhere. Inquiries were concentrated on addresses where six or more persons were registered.

When the lists appeared, all available men in the office went to work on them. An expert in ward topography helped spot suspicious collections of names. Reporters and photographers went to a few of these addresses, and the results were astonishing. They came back with descriptions and pictures of vacant buildings which were the addresses of dozens of names on the lists. They found lodging houses and hotels with only a few actual voting residences instead of the hundreds listed there. Bit by bit the evidence increased. The opening story broke on July 22, 1936.³² Photographs on page one showed the most spectacular of the frauds so far discovered. Across the pictures of two empty brick buildings almost falling apart ran the cutlines, "56 Registered From Here" and "48 Registered From Here." On the inside pages photographs of empty interiors glared at the reader. One hotel, with only 6 qualified voters, had a list of 160 living at the address.

To continue the disclosures and extend them to cover the whole city, Bovard organized a special news staff under City Editor Ben Reese, relieving men from other duties to devote full time to the exposé. Men worked long hours over lists, ringing doorbells and taking affidavits. Photographers, map makers, and notaries accompanied reporters on their search for evidence. Daily page-one stories ran over into pages four, five, or

³² *Ibid.*, July 22–September 18, 1936; *Editor and Publisher*, LXX (May 8, 1937), No. 19, p. 5.

six and seven. Reports carried long lists of nebulous names, more pictures of houses with inflated voting lists, saloons with "more votables than potables," and even confessions of election judges and clerks who had seen the padding. Two hotels run by an alderman had 468 registered voters, more than two thirds of whom were fraudulent. Twenty-four Caucasian registrants inhabited a Chinese laundry. The name of a nationally known handbookmaker who had died months before the revision was still on the list, and more obscure dead persons rested in peace on other precinct lists. In one north-side district where houses had been demolished for a street widening, canvassers had left the house numbers and the occupants on the lists for useful mass voting in the primary.

The bipartisan governor-appointed election board tried to soft-pedal the exposure at first, but later, in the face of overwhelming evidence, it weakly agreed to make a partial recanvass. Bovard in the news columns and Ross in the editorial columns demanded full and thorough investigation to confirm evidence already disclosed and to indicate the extent of the fraud. Hammering this demand at Governor Park and the election board, the paper finally got the latter to agree to order a complete official recheck. The new count showed more than 46,000 names of registrants who could not be found.

The *Post-Dispatch* carried its inquiry into other phases, exposing frauds committed in the primary and in a bond issue election the previous year. These new exposures further discredited the election board, and Governor Guy B. Park announced the removal of four

members, replacing them with his appointments. After the campaign was over, Bovard sent several men to Kansas City where they investigated a few precincts, enough to show that the same situation existed in the Pendergast domain. The *Kansas City Star* then canvassed the whole city, showing 60,000 ghost voters registered there.

The exposures resulted in more than one hundred indictments, but all prosecutions failed for technical reasons.³³ The *Post-Dispatch* was awarded its first Pulitzer Prize the following May for the "most distinguished and meritorious community service performed by a newspaper during the year. Silas Bent in *Newspaper Crusaders* stated that the long-term consequences of this crusade—the bringing of honest elections to St. Louis and later to Kansas City—may have been the most valuable of all *Post-Dispatch* crusades.

Toward the close of Bovard's forty years with the *Post-Dispatch*, he directed, as a sort of finale, a prodigious crusade against bribery of legislators by the Union Electric Company. This company was a unit of the North American system, a large utility holding company. The Union Electric building rose just across Twelfth Street from the *Post-Dispatch* newsroom, and thus literally obtruded into the managing editor's view every time he glanced out the window. Bovard, usually on the lookout for indications of debauchery in the

³³ Ross and Hurd, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Silas Bent, *Newspaper Crusaders* (New York, 1939), 38, says there were many convictions and penitentiary sentences, but evidently these were nullified by the higher courts.

operation of public utilities, doubtless remembered well the 1927 efforts of the paper, not entirely successful, to prevent the Laclede Gas Light Company's manipulating its evaluation to defeat proposed rate reductions. Or he could recall with more satisfaction a successful crusade two years later when Public Service, the city's streetcar company, persuaded the City Transit Commission to approve and the state legislature to endorse an indeterminate permit amounting to a permanent franchise. Bovard was absent on an extended trip to South America when the bill was proposed. He returned just in time to instigate a whirlwind of protest against the character and tendencies of the measure. Governor Henry S. Caulfield, convinced as was the *Post-Dispatch* that the bill was unsound, vetoed it over the legislature's approval.

Working on these stories had made Sam J. Shelton, Sr., somewhat of a utilities expert. When he brought in rumors of Union Electric's offer to contribute campaign funds to prospective legislators, Bovard asked him to keep working on the subject without arousing attention. Shelton started by examining the company's expense reports filed with the State Public Service Commission. His curiosity was challenged. Each report showed an unusually large figure classified solely as expense for legal services, for which the auditors, when appealed to, could not furnish items. Before Shelton could pursue this line of inquiry further, something happened that gave him an inside track. Oscar Funk, a personal friend of Shelton's and a vice president of Union Electric in charge of accounting, told him he had resigned and was ready to talk. Funk gave Shelton much general information showing the company's expenditure

of thousands of dollars annually for political favors. Bovard cautioned, "Oh, let's not flush the quarry. Handle Funk's resignation in a routine way, and keep on gathering evidence." Shelton had the background and framework for a story, but was still without the kind of verification needed for publication.

According to the facts he had, Union Electric operated an elegantly appointed lodge near Bagnell Dam on the Lake of the Ozarks, where it entertained the more important government executives and legislators. Arrow Lodge elsewhere on the Lake was a less expensive place for lesser politicians. The company also kept a large suite of rooms in a Jefferson City hotel during sessions of the legislature. These activities were financed by a fund kept by Frank Boehm, executive vice president, and derived from the Union Company's excessive fees to lawyers, who promptly refunded the excess. Company executives supplemented the fund with profits from overcharged expense accounts filed with the company.

In his search for proof, Shelton decided to study the company's reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission. These revealed that two Illinois lawyers, in addition to the company's own St. Louis counsel, which actually did the legal work, were receiving \$40,000.00 a year as retainers. What service were these lawyers doing for the company? Shelton wondered. Could they be representing it before the Federal Power Commission? The files of that agency held no record of their appearance.

Enlisting the help of the Securities and Exchange

Commission, Shelton secured the promise that the next time Union Electric filed for permission to issue securities, the commission would conduct a thorough investigation of its expenditures. After this, Bovard told Shelton to go ahead and write his story, stating that there would be an inquiry, what the inquiry would cover, and the bare fact that the commission would look into the payment of large fees to certain lawyers. The story, which also mentioned the lawyers' names and how much they were getting, was held in readiness to await the announcement from Washington.

It came on October 29, 1938, and Shelton's story broke that afternoon. The commission's St. Louis investigators held hearings, subpoenaed witnesses, and took depositions, all with negative results. The company officers lied when questioned under oath. A California man, formerly a newspaper reporter at St. Charles, told the *Post-Dispatch* how his salary had been paid by Union Electric to get items into the paper. Reporters went to Illinois and brought back the facts showing that lawyers for nearly ten years had turned one half of their fees back to the company. The Securities and Exchange Commission prosecuted on this evidence and that furnished by Oscar Funk. The company was convicted of violating the Corrupt Practices Act by distributing a \$600,000.00 slush fund for illegal purposes, and was fined \$80,000.00. Louis H. Egan, the president, was convicted of conspiracy to violate the holding company act; Frank J. Boehm and Albert C. Laun, indicted on perjury charges, served prison terms.³⁴

³⁴ Ross and Hurd, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 24.

O. K. Bovard had resigned from the *Post-Dispatch* before the big story broke. On the day he resigned, he and Shelton were standing at the window, gazing over toward Union Electric.

"There are just two things I regret to leave unfinished," Bovard said. "One is the Neu murder out in the county [a gang murder Bovard had long tried to have prosecuted]; and the other is that Union Electric business over there." Shelton promised his chief to take care of the Union Electric. Less than three months later he had fulfilled that promise. The Neu murder, however, has never been solved.

This was Managing Editor Bovard at the height of his talents and powers. By these achievements he became, in the words Horatio Seymour had used twenty years earlier, a news general instead of a mere fighter on the line. It may well be that his chief future place in history will rest upon his consummate skill as a master thinker, planner, and director of campaign strategy. Besides the inestimable benefit to society which resulted, these campaigns brought distinction outside its region to the *Post-Dispatch* for the first time. Bovard's news leadership in the 'twenties gained for the paper a new position of influence in national affairs. Primarily on the basis of the *Post-Dispatch's* accomplishments, a critic in the *Nation* judged it "second to no other newspaper in this country as a liberal news-daily, free and unfettered, able to say what it thinks without fear or favor." In comparison, the New York *Times* printed greater vol-

ume but, the critic felt, was in nearly every other respect inferior to the *Post-Dispatch*. He ranked the *Sun* papers of Baltimore next to the *Post-Dispatch* in cleanliness, fearlessness, intelligent news-gathering, tolerance, liberalism, and keen editorial comment. The New York *World*, at that time declining, ranked even lower. "The *Post-Dispatch* has repeatedly lived up to the highest duty that rests upon the press—that of exposing rascality in public office."³⁵ From the Senate floor Senator Norris praised the record of the paper in the Teapot Dome investigations, and in deference to its liberalism, its intelligence, and its independence, he dubbed it "The Manchester Guardian of America."³⁶

That Bovard deserves the major share of the credit for the news policy that brought the *Post-Dispatch* national prominence no authority doubts. Anderson went so far as to assert that while the paper had a brilliant staff, it was known in the trade as a "one man newspaper." "It is safe to say," he added, "that nothing of importance has appeared in its news columns for thirty years which did not bear the imprint of his singular genius."³⁷

³⁵ *The Nation*, CXXVII (December 19, 1928), No. 3311, p. 675.

³⁶ Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *loc. cit.*, 6.

³⁷ Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*

Techniques, Principles, and Practices

BECAUSE THE TERM "crusading" held a special meaning for Bovard, he stoutly denied that it should be accurately applied to his campaigns or to the *Post-Dispatch*. A crusading paper to him meant one that campaigned with only obvious facts against surface social evils and for motives of profitable sensationalism. On the other hand, he thought the "true newspaper" not only reported the surface facts but also went further, digging out and publishing the hidden details, forces, aims, and methods.¹ Moreover, the true newspaper's primary aim must never be forgotten: that the people might know. This was the guiding principle. It must never give way to lesser motives. The difference, then, according to Bovard's definition, appeared to be one of degree of penetration and unselfishness of purpose. Without spurning the crusading paper, because he recognized its great social value, the managing editor tried to make the *Post-Dispatch* measure up to the standards of what he termed the "true newspaper."

How did the *Post-Dispatch* do it? What were the

¹ George Seldes, *Lords of the Press* (New York, 1938), 268-69; Harold T. Meek, address to journalism educators, Minneapolis, August 31, 1949; Associated Press biographical sketch, released February 1, 1939, *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

principal crusading techniques? At the start of a campaign, Bovard laid out the grand strategy, often summoning reporters to his desk, even as managing editor, to outline procedure in detail. Thorough documentation and gathering of evidence always preceded publicity. Bovard worked intensively and incessantly. Neither expense nor reporters' time were spared. He kept closely informed on every development, and, in order that not the slightest, most apparently insignificant angle would be overlooked, he often instructed his men to follow what seemed to be unpromising leads. He became so absorbed in the Muench case that he gave up his customary fall duck-shooting expedition to Saskatchewan. He took time to think through the ramifications, to find the unexplained gaps in the sequence of events. Bovard's great natural intellectual powers, his alertness, his moral courage, and his sharp news sense were all brought to bear upon the problem. These were the assets which enabled him to become an outstanding general of news campaigns.²

As the campaign progressed more facts emerged and were published. Further investigation, repetition, hammering, and more repetition followed. Quite early in the campaign Bovard assigned a man to determine the remedies for the evil; and publication of suggested remedies, sometimes collected in a symposium, became an additional weapon in the fight. The editorial department supported with editorials and cartoons. In the midst of the barrage, new revelations frequently came to the *Post-Dispatch*. Individuals came forward with new and vital information; public mass meetings assembled, and

² Raymond P. Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949.

informed public opinion exerted its influence; then, officials, impelled by such pressure, started to act. The final phase of a *Post-Dispatch* crusade was described by Joseph Pulitzer II at the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1947. "Sooner or later public opinion will crystalize. When it speaks there can be heard the voice of the dissenting minority, but ever and above can be heard the roar of a great tidal wave. The tidal wave is the inexorable, majestic force that, in this country we know as the power of public opinion. Another name for it is American democracy. . . ." ³

Bovard voiced a few cautions he thought basic to good campaign techniques. "In writing the news be more scrupulous in reporting the acts or utterances of a person or group you are fighting than those of the individual or party you are supporting. In one case you may pay an undeserved compliment, and not only be forgiven, but beloved. In the other case if you err, you may be publicly revealed as wrong and obliged to recant. Then you are weaker and the foe is correspondingly stronger." ⁴ He once warned a reporter who was showing more zeal than discretion, "Never fire both barrels of your gun at once. If you kill him with one charge, you have saved ammunition. If he is only wounded and strikes back, you can finish him with the other load. That will show the public you wanted to be humane." ⁵

The editor was fond of minimizing the influence of the editorial page as a factor in campaign success. Only 5 per cent of the paper's readers follow the editorials,

³ "Missouri Honor Awards," in University of Missouri Journalism Series 110, Vol. 48, No. 25 (October 1, 1947).

⁴ *Goldfish Bowl*, V (September, 1938), No. 41, p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

and only one per cent understands them, he once told a reporter.⁶ The *Post-Dispatch* fights were won or lost on the first page. Actually, the editorial page's influence was powerful, and he knew it. His opinion stemmed in part from a feeling of departmental rivalry. However, Bovard did believe that in campaigns the news and the facts counted most. "I am among those newspaper workers who never accepted the Pulitzer tradition and philosophy in their entirety," he once wrote. "Pulitzer's editorial page was his forte. It often contained more information than his news columns, but was biased by comment. The soul of intellectual integrity, and supremely confident that his judgment was best for the public, he did not hesitate to feed facts with one hand and his own deductions from them with the other. A more modern and more effective practice is to give full information in the news columns, regardless of the editor's opinion, and to reserve the editorial page for illumination and argument."⁷

Any appraisal of factors contributing to the success of *Post-Dispatch* campaigns should take into consideration the conditions in which Bovard worked—factors of which he himself was not, perhaps, fully aware.⁸ Newsprint was cheap, and international affairs took up less space than they do today; thus Bovard had by today's standards unbelievably large quantities of white space to fill. Especially was this so in the 'twenties, when the business boom made forty-two to sixty page papers

⁶ Bent, *Newspaper Crusaders*, 226.

⁷ Bovard to the editor of the *Post-Dispatch*, unpublished letter, February 28, 1931. These words might well apply to Bovard himself, who occasionally engaged in the same practice in the news columns.

⁸ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*, 30; Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949.

almost a daily occurrence. Too, Bovard was given a free hand, full authority, and unlimited resources by his publisher for expensive news investigation, coverage, and development. A third factor was Bovard's exceptional staff. Without his corps of editors and reporters to advise him and to carry out his missions, he could have done little as chief of staff. He had superior reporters in Anderson, Ross, Childs, Brandt, Rogers, Shelton, McCulloch, Webster, Roy and Jack Alexander, Richard Baumhoff, Curtis Betts, Lawrence Laybourne, and Boyd Carroll. Editors Ben Reese, Raymond Crowley, Dwight Perrin, Sam Armstrong, S. R. Stanard, and H. T. Meek were leading news executives. In the fourth place, the *Post-Dispatch* during this period was always a leading paper. Although competition was never slack during Bovard's time, the paper was never forced to the position of underdog. It was a sound Pulitzer project marked by the Pulitzer tradition. Such favorable circumstances notwithstanding, little would have been accomplished without dynamic, brilliant, foresighted leadership, the kind Bovard provided. He was out to expose corruption in government and in big business, and he had the money, the talent, and the space with which to do it.

"One single blunder," the elder Pulitzer said, "destroys confidence in a thousand statements." Crusading demanded skillful, accurate reporting of the news behind the news. Bovard's basic approach to a news situation was almost scientific. He advanced a hypothesis on

meager evidence; then by a series of experiments he proved or disproved his hypothesis. He started with some bit of vague report, what he called a "news nugget." If the facts eventually proved the hypothesis correct and if they dealt with sensational and significant matters, Bovard's method could be, and often was, astonishingly effective. Of course, as might be expected, there were times when costly and time-consuming investigation proved his hypothesis utterly without foundation. But this eventuality was a necessary hazard, as it is in countless scientific experiments which prove fruitless. But these can be overlooked when one hypothesis produces a great discovery.

A Bovard decision based upon hypothesis is illustrated in his handling of the false armistice flash of November 7, 1918. Four days before the actual signing, the news came by cable from Brest, France, signed by Roy Howard and William P. Simms, president and foreign correspondent, respectively, of the United Press. According to the message the armistice had been signed at eleven o'clock and hostilities were to cease at two o'clock on November 7. In St. Louis, the *Star*, never doubting a cable from Howard, hit the streets with an extra. Soon excited, milling throngs poured out of buildings and normal activity halted. All afternoon sporadic street-dancing broke out, and a long victory parade soon formed to march for hours past the *Post-Dispatch* building at Olive and Twelfth streets.

In the third floor newsroom, the managing editor scanned an Associated Press dispatch stating that such a report, not officially verified, had been picked up in a cable message by the Navy's intelligence service. The

Washington bureau, in response to Bovard's telephone call, could furnish no confirmation. Bovard then studied the latest official news from the front. Up to eleven o'clock the German Armistice commissioners had not even entered the French lines, and Pershing's army was heavily engaged in front of Sedan as late as 1:45 P.M. It seemed obvious that the signing could not possibly have taken place until some hours after the meeting of the negotiators. Taking the stand that the report could not be true, Bovard calmly ordered the issuance of the regular noon edition, which would ignore the armistice flash. The edition merely announced that American troops had entered Stenay. Celebrating St. Louisans dancing in the rain in front of the *Post-Dispatch* building began to jeer when they saw the first papers.

In the newsroom tension mounted as the apprehension grew that the paper was being monumentally scooped. But this fear was mild in comparison with the panic that prevailed in the business office, which had lost the prospect of additional sales.

In the midst of confusion and uncertainty Bovard sat at his desk with what seemed to be inhuman detachment. He gave his attention to the coverage of the local result of the false report. He could have published the report and labeled it "unverified" on the basis of the Associated Press dispatch he had in his hands, but at no time did he permit the paper to print a statement that the armistice had been signed.⁹ Bovard almost alone in all the country was keeping his head, was holding back, notwithstanding terrific pressure from the boiling, seething mob outside and emotional reaction inside. This

⁹ Bovard, autobiographical essay.

picture of Bovard is the sharpest memory of the men who worked for him. It was not until the next morning that St. Louis realized its mistake; the *Post-Dispatch* had been vindicated, and it gained in circulation and prestige, while the *Star* lost in both.¹⁰

Out of the journalistic triumphs of a lifetime this was the only one of which Bovard took notice in his briefly sketched autobiographical statement. His own account of the episode was modest, detailing simply how he came to reach his decision. It is interesting to note—though this was not a factor in his decision, Bovard pointed out—the United Press message itself bore no inherent mark of truth, for no authority was given.¹¹ Bovard had for years borne a mild prejudice toward the United Press. It was a part of his lack of confidence in news agencies generally. Howard had tried repeatedly to sell the United Press service to the *Post-Dispatch*, but his efforts always met the opposition of Managing Editor Bovard, who preferred to spend the money on staff payroll.¹² Consequently, when the armistice flash was proved false and premature, Bovard cabled Howard to deride him,

Roy Howard, Brest, France

UNITED PRESS, NO. HA HA.

O. K. Bovard.

Even after twenty years Bovard was still critical of the kind of reporting represented by the message. He

¹⁰ A. G. Lincoln to the author, January 1, 1949. Lincoln was circulation manager in November, 1918.

¹¹ Bovard, autobiographical essay.

¹² Bovard in letter to the editor, *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (March 26, 1938), No. 13, p. 52.

called it typical of the cocksure "hairtrigger" reporting that he did not want in the news columns for which he was responsible. Forrest Davis in a magazine article¹³ described Bovard's relations with Howard in a way that the former thought misleading. After trying unsuccessfully to get the *Post* to print his side, he got a hearing in the pages of *Editor and Publisher*. Here he pointed out that the message on its face showed that Howard had not seen the armistice signing and that he could not report that someone had told him. Since he did not so report, Bovard accurately judged it unreliable and prompted, of course, by the United Press' understandable desire to scoop the world on the end of the war.¹⁴

Although the refusal to print the false armistice¹⁵ story was a triumph of news judgment, Bovard was not always so fortunate or foresighted in his calculations. Sometimes his original hypothesis proved erroneous. Probably his biggest mistake occurred when, nine years later, he turned down the opportunity to buy first rights to Lindbergh's story. The British Admiralty viewed Lindbergh's projected flight as suicide; all eyes, including Bovard's, were on Byrd and Chamberlain, better known than Lindbergh, who were also planning a nonstop flight to Europe. Roy Alexander, *Post-Dispatch* reporter and a friend of Lindbergh, had made arrange-

¹³ Forrest Davis, "Press Lord, A Portrait of Roy Howard," in *The Saturday Evening Post*, CCX (March 12, 1938), No. 37, p. 30.

¹⁴ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (March 26, 1938), No. 13, p. 52.

¹⁵ Accounts of Bovard's treatment of the false armistice report may be found in *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 20, and Irving Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*, 13. For analysis of the false armistice news generally, see Webb Miller, *I Found No Peace* (New York, 1936), 90-108, and "How the Armistice Flash Came, November 7, 1918," in *Editor and Publisher*, LXXXIV (December 8, 1951), No. 50, 10 ff.

ments with the flyer to buy the exclusive first person story of his flight to Paris. It was the plan that when Lindbergh arrived in St. Louis, he was to be met by City Editor Ben Reese and Alexander, who would have the contract ready for him to sign. Ignoring their protests, Bovard withheld his approval of the plan, and the contract was never signed. He said he would not take the responsibility of "gambling on a man's life for the sake of a piece of newspaper promotion."¹⁶ The New York *Times* signed Lindbergh before he took off. Edwin L. James and Carlyle MacDonald, both of the *Times's* Paris staff, covered the famous arrival. From the sale of the story the *Times* realized \$85,000.00, which it gave to Lindbergh. In St. Louis, the *Globe-Democrat*, which had helped finance Lindbergh and which had the *Times* service, published the news first.¹⁷ Bovard never mentioned the affair to Reese. He told someone else, probably Anderson, with decided terseness: "If the decision were to be made again, it would be the same."

It seemed to Carlos Hurd that when Bovard was guiding his staff in competitive news assignments he worked as a chess devotee might work over a problem on the board. To support this view, he cited the example of a famous Bovard "checkmate." A tip-peddler once called on the managing editor, outlining in general terms without naming names or revealing other tangibles, what promised to be a major news story. Bovard was interested. He made an offer, and the man withdrew to consider but failed to return. Concluding that

¹⁶ Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*, 3.

¹⁷ Ben H. Reese to the author, January 23, 1952; Silas Bent, *Ballyhoo* (New York, 1927), 38.

the informer had sold the tip to a rival paper, Bovard called a conference, and in the ensuing discussion a working hypothesis was arrived at. Soon the central figure of the story, an embezzling east-side official, was accompanying a *Post-Dispatch* reporter to the governor's office in Springfield, where he made a confession. The story appeared exclusively in the *Post-Dispatch*, while the rival paper, having bought the documentary evidence, was awaiting its own good time to break the news.¹⁸

One key to Bovard's judgment of news lay in his "organic" sense of news values. As an apostle of economic determinism, he looked to the fundamental bases of society and culture. A scale of basic values for an individual, or for a newspaper, in Bovard's thinking, started with the concept of man as primarily an economic animal, whose life being was shaped to a great extent by his search for the necessities. But, while food, clothing, and shelter as basic needs of man provided the skeleton of his news philosophy, it was large enough to include such factors as the right to work, the right to know and learn, and medical care for the sick. Until a bed existed in every hospital for every sick and needy person, or until a desk was provided in every school-room for every child, Bovard felt that the question of a symphony orchestra for St. Louis should remain relatively unimportant. Thomas B. Sherman, the paper's music and book critic, might argue that music should be classified as a necessity, but Bovard would not have agreed. This concept of news values explains in part Bovard's desire to minimize the entertainment features

¹⁸ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, 20.

of the paper and his eagerness to replace them with more solid stuff. He told Marguerite Martyn, who wrote about fashions and women's activities, "Always remember, your work is not important. It is merely interesting."¹⁹ When men were unemployed and starving, he grew impatient with the "fluff" and trivia that filled great quantities of newspaper space.

Bovard acquired two habits which tended to distort his generally sure news judgment. Particularly noticeable during the later years, was his tendency to think of the *Post-Dispatch* in a personal, possessive way as a direct expression of his own personality. In a sense, of course, it could be said that throughout his whole career the newspaper was his life; but, whether conscious or not, this personal identification was a gradual development. It grew to the point that he was pained when any part of it fell below his towering standards. It is understood, then, that in selecting and emphasizing the news, he occasionally permitted his personal attitudes, tastes, premises, and even predilections to bias his news sense. This was not due so much to selfishness or conceit, as to his supreme confidence in the correctness of his own judgment. Other editors protested Bovard's three column headline, "Wiley Post and Will Rogers Killed . . .," arguing that Rogers' name should be placed first. Bovard disagreed. Rogers was just a comic; Post was a man of "scientific distinction." The headline stayed as it was.²⁰

Such possessiveness was sometimes overbearing. Dictating the first paragraph of the death story of Dr. A. C. Bernays, a well-known personality, Bovard described

¹⁹ Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press* (New York and London, 1936), 555.

²⁰ Reese to the author, January 23, 1952.

the doctor as an atheist. He was immediately corrected by Andy Drew. "Dr. Bernays was an agnostic, not an atheist," Drew stated. "An atheist is one who positively denies the existence of God, while an agnostic merely says he doesn't know. That is the distinction Noah Webster makes."

"That may be true," Bovard rejoined, "but Webster isn't the city editor of the *Post-Dispatch*."

The other habit that colored his presentation of the news was his long-standing custom of rewriting or copiously interlining reporters' copy. Changing the view of the man on the scene is a highly questionable practice from the standpoint of journalistic ethics. Some of Bovard's editing made the original story hardly recognizable. Brandt's dispatches on the Philadelphia Democratic Convention were so treated; Spencer McCulloch's interview with Pendergast was first written triple-space to allow plenty of room for Bovard's changes and additions. Generally, there seems to be little reason to believe this questionable practice had serious repercussions, though it must have resulted in some degree of distortion. Perhaps it was that, after spending years in his autocratic position, Bovard felt certain of his own intellectual integrity and came to feel that his judgment was best for the public. These habits, which more than ever placed the stamp of his personality on the *Post-Dispatch*, made the paper "a man in print." While Bovard would not have agreed with this, he believed that the character of a newspaper depended a great deal upon the man at its helm. He could picture vividly what kind of man in print a "realtor" or an "investment broker" would be, or the kind of man in print the chain news-

paper was when run by a committee of men whose decisions usually resulted in compromise. Bovard believed that the man in print must be a journalist, as distinct from a mere merchandiser of news and features. He pictured him as an autocrat, a despot, with no board of directors, although his judgment would be tempered by the group opinion of a few associates whose wisdom he respected.²¹ That was the kind of editor Bovard thought a managing editor ought to be, and perhaps when he tried to make the *Post-Dispatch* Oliver Kirby Bovard, it was because he wanted it to measure up to such standards.

With all the limitations indicated, the fact remains: Bovard's sense of news values could be ranked among the sharpest in the profession, and his judgment was usually as quick and precise as it was unerring.

With Bovard the news was no less than the truth, and he constantly worked to eliminate the barriers between the two. He told his reporters, "Never be satisfied with the surface of the news. There is a formal and superficial aspect of every news story. It may be a police report, a lawyer's brief, an application for a trolley franchise, or a president's message to Congress. As such it may have a proper place in your story. But to print that alone may result in misleading the reader partially or completely." It is a vital part of the reporter's job to provide the reader additional data which could give him the true picture, Bovard maintained. "Between the reporter and the reader a direct and independent relationship exists. Your responsibility to the reader cannot be

²¹ Bovard to the editor of the *Post-Dispatch*, unpublished letter, February 28, 1931.

shifted. If, through his reliance on you, the reader is misinformed or inadequately informed, you have failed in your professional duty.”²² He cautioned Anderson, “Be very sure, . . . never to permit yourself or the newspaper you serve to be used as the instrument for misleading the reader. . . .”²³ To help newsmen get all of the basic facts, he instructed them never to leave unanswered any question a reasonable and intelligent reader might ask.²⁴

Bovard once noticed in copy that *Post-Dispatch* readers were to be informed that Boss Haitch was “secretly planning to dictate judicial nominations and put himself in control of the courts as well as the municipal machine.” He queried the reporter, “Did Haitch confide in you his secret purposes?”

“Well, no. But that’s what the boys believe his game is, and I personally am sure of it.”

“We won’t publish this. Our readers might not believe we have a seer and a psychic on our staff. We’ll confine our news to what is actually said and done. We haven’t progressed to the point where we can report what people think unless they can express their thoughts.”²⁵

Wild guesses and overoptimistic estimates kept bobbing up in local copy, and Bovard grew weary of irresponsible statements concerning the size of crowds, throngs, hordes, mobs, hosts, “outpourings,” and “seas of humanity.” Guesses for the same gathering varied several thousand in each newspaper, and each cited the

²² Anderson, “The Greatest Managing Editor,” *loc. cit.*

²³ *Id.*, “Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*,” *loc. cit.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*; *Goldfish Bowl*, V, No. 41 (September, 1938), 3.

²⁵ *Goldfish Bowl*, V, No. 41 (September, 1938), 3.

police as authority. In 1916, when plans for a big "preparedness" parade were announced, Bovard made his private preparations. He hired two crews of computers from a railroad company's auditing offices, and without telling either one about the other crew, he put them to counting the marchers at different points along the route. The *Post-Dispatch's* estimate was undoubtedly accurate, but far below that of any other journal. "The other papers have beaten us by thousands," an editor commented.

"But we scooped them on the truth," Bovard retorted.²⁶

"If there was anything on which he set more store than professional skill, good craftsmanship, it was the truth," Anderson wrote. "And when I say truth I also mean precision and exactitude to the limit of human performance. . . . He would fire a man for failing to get a middle initial—or for getting it wrong. In the larger aspects of truth he was even more severe. . . ."

It was in these larger aspects of truth-seeking that the managing editor sought to keep clear of "entangling alliances" or pressures of any kind that might embarrass him in his single-minded determination to print all the news. By alliances, he meant, for instance, membership in clubs or any type of obligation, professional or private, which might affect his ability to obtain or to distinguish the truth. In this respect, his aloofness, which in a gregarious profession seemed unusual, became legendary and a trademark of his personality. Yet this same tendency to avoid outside pressures which might prejudice objective news handling has been and still is

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

an important *Post-Dispatch* principle. Doubtless what still is *Post-Dispatch* tradition, however, can be traced in part to Bovard's firm example. His professional standing made a strange contrast to his personal self-effacement. He was perhaps the least known of St. Louis executives, making no speeches or other public appearances and abstaining from club membership. While other editors did these things, he was content to run the paper and to confine his leadership of civic affairs entirely to journalistic channels. He was publicity shy. No photograph or biographical sketch appeared until his resignation in 1938. He consistently threw *Who's Who* information blanks into his wastebasket, and so never appeared in that work. The only organization to which he belonged was a hunting and fishing club. He limited himself socially to a narrow circle of friends in which he and Mrs. Bovard were known as gracious hosts.

Bovard seemed to carry his desire for privacy too far at times, particularly when it suited his convenience. Marlen E. Pew, editor of *Editor and Publisher*, wanted to include a biographical story about Bovard's journalistic achievements as one of the paper's series called "Romances in American Journalism." Bovard's refusals ultimately brought Pew's protesting acquiescence. "All right. . . . But you are breakin' our hearts," Pew admonished;

you haven't any more right to privacy than any other newspaper man and *Editor and Publisher* carries 20 or 30 pages every week all about newspaper men. Also you are not taking your own medicine because no newspaper—the *Post-Dispatch* included—could get out for a single day on this interpretation of the right of privacy. . . . The right kind of story about O. K.

Bovard would be better stuff . . . than anything we could print. Newspaper men look to you and the *P-D* for guidance, not without good reason. . . .²⁷

Editor and Publisher got no story until Bovard resigned.

Indeed, the editor succeeded so well in keeping information about himself out of print, that once, when he fell critically ill, the reference department with considerable difficulty could assemble only slender information for an obituary. When the subject of the necessarily brief sketch recovered, he ordered it filed in a sealed envelope not to be opened except upon his express instructions. When he resigned he removed the envelope, hoping his retirement would remain as unpublicized as his career had been,²⁸ but he did prepare a short undated statement of "biographical facts," written in the third person. This provided a bare account indeed, and considering the extent of his achievements, it was a masterpiece of understatement.

A trait closely related to his self-effacement was his lack of pretension. He scribbled office memoranda on rough copy paper in the bold strokes of a blunt, blue copy pencil. Though always well-dressed outside the office, he appeared at his desk in rolled-up shirt sleeves, with open collar and no tie. Scorning a private office, he kept his desk in the big newsroom which covered almost a full floor of the building. Anyone could reach him without running the gamut of a battery of stenographers and office boys. Bovard had once heard that a

²⁷ Marlen E. Pew to O. K. Bovard, March 24, 1930.

²⁸ *Time*, XXXII (August 8, 1938), No. 6.

person had to go through seven doors to see an executive of the *World*, and he considered that fact a symptom, if not a cause, of its decline. Because he thought tall columns pretentious, he objected strenuously to the original plan for his new country house, colonial with a row of two-story pillars across the front. The plan was changed. Though it was a large estate, he referred to it as "the farmhouse," and a retreat from the country club crowd.

There are a few who knew Bovard, however, who believe his self-imposed isolation might have been to some extent a defense mechanism, not entirely induced by the need to protect his news judgments from outside influences. Quite obviously, such isolation had its disadvantages. It could also keep a newsman out of contact with the world and prevent the development of friendships as important news sources. It perhaps limited his ability to judge public men. He considered Franklin D. Roosevelt a "mere actor," and thought Alfred E. Smith unfit for the presidency, perhaps because he came up from the sidewalks of New York. In contrast, however, his judgment of men with whom he associated daily was quick and precise. Though he might be accused of extreme method, nonetheless, few conscientious newspaper workers would question the worthiness of his motive.

In other ways the managing editor endeavored to cut down the barriers between the news and the truth. He took pleasure in demonstrating his independence of the business office, or "counting room," as he termed it and of other forces seeking to influence his handling of the news. Business office "musts"—i.e. stories of business

activities which the business office has promised to run with advertising—seldom came his way, and on occasions when a story with a commercial tie-in did come to his desk, Bovard delighted in ignoring it. W. C. Steigers, business manager for many years and a forceful personality himself, often complained and accused Bovard of trying to undermine the financial stability of the paper. His efforts to change conditions proved vain. Bovard's solid opposition, in which he had the publisher's support, was based on the principle of the first Joseph Pulitzer, that independent news policies should be allowed free rein and business success would follow. S. R. Stanard told of a minor department store elevator accident which received small play in the first edition. A delegation of store executives, led by Steigers, descended upon Bovard with complete suppression of the story as their aim. In the ensuing conference, no one raised his voice, but the men soon departed looking dissatisfied. Bovard stepped to the copydesk and ordered the headline on the story in question boosted to a two-column display deck, and thus it appeared in the remaining editions of the day.

When the municipal opera was getting started, one of its sponsors, Charles Stix, department store owner, came up on the editorial floor about midnight one Saturday and offered Bovard a set of box seat tickets. In high indignation and insult, Bovard ordered him off the floor. One certain way to get the news printed on page one was to try to keep it out of the paper, especially for business reasons. This rule was never bypassed. The size of a business firm's account with the *Post-Dispatch*

never concerned its managing editor in his work with the news.

In other matters he showed equal independence. He never became a party to co-operative news coverage schemes or deadline agreements with other St. Louis newspapers. Foster Eaton, Associated Press bureau manager, noted that the *Post-Dispatch's* first two editions contained not a line about the Hauptmann trial. He reached Bovard by telephone to ask him whether he would care to explain why. "No," Bovard replied brusquely. "I am not accountable to you for what the *Post* does or does not print, and I do not care to discuss the matter with you."²⁹ When the *Post-Dispatch* was campaigning against certain circuit court judges' practice of signing bail bonds in advance for the convenience of professional bondsmen, Bovard received a telephone call from one of the judges figuring prominently in the stories. The judge begged the editor to call off the campaign. Persuasion failing, he threatened to sue for libel. "Well, judge, don't you think you ought to consult a lawyer first?" was Bovard's nettling piece of advice.

Example after example of Bovard's courageous defiance of pressures could be cited. Yet there were times when, in spite of all efforts, he found himself still not a free agent in the defense of the truth. Bovard called Irving Dilliard's attention to a modest item below the page one fold. "Here," he said, circling the item in blue, "is a lie. I know it is a lie, but I must print it because it is spoken by a prominent public official. The public official's name and position make the lie news. Were the

²⁹ Foster Eaton, unpublished memorandum, January 16, 1936, in *Post-Dispatch* Reference Library.

source some unknown person, I could and would have gladly thrown it in the wastebasket. I have done what I can to show that I know that the statement is untrue by putting it under a small headline and printing only enough of it to make an entry in the record of the day's news. Printing these lies, even this way, is one of the hardest things I have to do."³⁰ Even if a managing editor could always and infallibly determine truth, his duties, dealing as they do, with news and not opinion, would not permit him to label each story as either true or untrue.³¹ But the news department can bring out the facts and, with the assistance of the editorial department's interpretation of those facts, help bring the truth to light. At the end of his career, Bovard could look back and insist that it was possible in America to run a "wholly free newspaper which will make money despite all social, economic, and other pressures."³²

Bovard's craftsmanship extended with the same effectiveness into the field of human relations. As an executive in complete charge of the news, his leadership as managing editor was like that of his city editor days. Dilliard remembered him in his more mature years as a man who carried his handsome head high and kept himself in excellent physical form by daily exercises.

³⁰ Dilliard, "Congressional Investigations," *loc. cit.*, 587.

³¹ In 1952, however, there was much concern and debate about the editor's duty to label false statements in the news. See Frank L. Mott, *The News in America* (Cambridge, 1952), 84-87.

³² Seldes, *Lords of the Press*, 271.

His eyes were gray steel and just as sharp and at times equally hard and penetrating. . . . There was a suggestion of a downward turn at the corners of his mouth, but it could and often did break into a smile, which now and then was the quick forerunner of a rich laugh. His nose was long and straight and seemed somehow to suggest its acuteness for news.

He spent much of his time away from the *Post-Dispatch* out of doors. A consequence was that his face was tanned almost around the calendar. In later years, hair that turned from gray to white was a striking complement to the bronzed skin. He would have made a magnificent Indian chief.

The personable physical appearance could conceal a complex and paradoxical nature. He could be coldly formal, even insulting, and he could be warm and generous. The distance he maintained between himself and his subordinates, as a group, caused him to be known as a "hard man." He could be grave, stern, sardonic, austere, ruthless, and rude. As a disciplinarian he used a pitiless tongue.³³ He could end a conversation with "I've heard enough of this" and hang up. He could close a conference at his desk with no more formal dismissal than picking up the latest edition and starting to read.³⁴

One day a young reporter on the staff whose name he did not know gave the managing editor a ride to the office. The reporter's irritating accent still ringing in his ears, Bovard called the city editor to find out his name. On being told, Bovard said, "Fire him. He doesn't know the English language."³⁵ Observing a reporter on the staff who had the habit of wearing a cap, Bovard remarked to Harold Meek that he doubted whether any

³³ Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*

³⁴ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*, 13.

³⁵ Dwight Perrin to the author, October 20, 1951.

man who wore a cap could ever make a good newspaperman. "Send out and buy that man a hat, or tell him to go home and stay."

These seeming injustices were not frequent. Those who became the target of the managing editor's searching questions and his ruthless disregard of feelings were usually the careless and incapable who fell below his standards. "His subordinates and associates had opinions of him in direct ratio to their competence," Anderson said.

In fact, those who saw only the inconsiderate side of O. K. Bovard really did not know him. Behind the stern demeanor was an editor who was, after all, only the master reporter. This same Bovard was warmhearted and the best friend of every good man who ever worked for him.³⁶ Charles G. Ross saw him as a just man.³⁷ Certainly away from the office he seemed to be a different person. To Lawrence Laybourne, a cub reporter, Bovard had always seemed a formidable figure, until he glimpsed the other side of the managing editor's personality at the wedding party of Ross's son Walter. Bovard was convivial, ordered champagne for the group which included Laybourne, and "was just as merry as a man could be."³⁸ Kyle Crichton, the magazine writer, knew only the genial side of Bovard and found it difficult to believe stories about his toughness. The Bovard that Crichton knew was the gay, jocular fellow, the stimulating conversationalist and wit, who contributed mightily to the enjoyment of dinner parties in which

³⁶ Anderson, "The Greatest Managing Editor," *loc. cit.*, 42.

³⁷ Charles G. Ross to Mrs. Bovard, November 5, 1945, O. K. Bovard Papers, in the possession of Mrs. Bovard, St. Louis, Missouri. This collection is not now available to scholars.

³⁸ Lawrence E. Laybourne to the author, January 13, 1949.

Daniel Fitzpatrick, Otto Heller, and Clark McAdams often joined. Consequently, Crichton was amazed to learn of the awe in which Bovard's *Post-Dispatch* associates held him. When Crichton mentioned "this bouncy side of Bovard," people looked at him as though he "were demented or at least had got him confused with somebody else."³⁹

The stern official demeanor was to an extent a pose, and Bovard realized it. He once told Sam Armstrong it was necessary in his position to preserve a formal atmosphere in the office. Perhaps the pattern of transformation for most men who got to know him well was best described by Ross: "What a forbidding figure—no, 'forbidding' isn't the word, but what a remote, Olympian figure he seemed to me when, as a raw cub reporter, I joined the *Post-Dispatch*! But what a teacher! And soon I saw in him a just man," and finally, "I came to know the warm-hearted human being that was Jack Bovard and had the privilege—as I believe—of his friendship."⁴⁰ It seems true, then, that once a person pierced that formal barrier, the real Bovard was revealed.

Bovard was noted for the clarity and thoroughness of his method of giving assignments. He briefed the man on what he was expected to find, and often indicated how he was to find it. He prepared him for what problems might arise by sketching in background. Once when he was complimented for such clarity, he replied, "Oh, an editor is supposed to case the joint." When the

³⁹ Kyle Crichton to *id.*, November 18, 1951.

⁴⁰ Ross to Mrs. Bovard, November 5, 1945, O. K. Bovard Papers, St. Louis, Missouri.

newsman reported back to him, Bovard outlined how the story was to be written, sometimes dictating the first paragraphs, and asking whether his lead fitted the facts. The reporter was not allowed to take notes during the conference, but was expected to reproduce the Bovard lead from memory.⁴¹ Giving careful attention to tactics and techniques, Bovard showed the reporter the possibilities for a major story, turned him loose on his own resources, then told him when and where he made mistakes.

As managing editor Bovard lost none of his old ability to drive home lessons with caustic irony. Grattan Kerens, like many others, was tempered in the fire. When Kerens called in a story, Bovard's relentless questioning revealed the absence of a major fact. "There's still time," said Kerens. "I'll go back and get it."

"Never mind, Kerens," was the dry response. "I'm sending a reporter out on the story."⁴²

Any reporter whom Bovard considered adequately trained was presumed to be accurate and fair in handling the news. Once a reporter or an editor had convinced the managing editor of his integrity and reliability, Bovard trusted him as he trusted himself. Kerens, for twenty years the paper's highly-competent city hall reporter, was such a man. When a city official, claiming he was misquoted, telephoned Bovard to accuse Kerens of "deliberate fabrication," Bovard replied in a calm, even voice, "I am convinced Mr. Kerens quoted you correctly. Mr. Kerens has been with the *Post-Dispatch* a long time and we have never had grounds for

⁴¹ Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949.

⁴² Anderson, "The Greatest Managing Editor," *loc. cit.*

doubting his carefulness and fairness. And, of course, Mr. Smith, we know very little of you. . . . We shall continue to publish your statement in our remaining editions. Goodbye. . . .”⁴³

A reporter's confidences, too, were to the managing editor a sacred trust. Newsmen were to avoid committing themselves to secrecy, but once a confidence was pledged, it must be kept. Only by rigidly following this principle, Bovard believed, could news sources be kept open and loyal to the paper. Before World War I the municipal assembly invited reporters from all St. Louis papers to its river-boat party; but it was understood that nothing was to be written. A *Post-Dispatch* man with the city editor's permission attended the affair. Next day a rival paper broke faith and published a one-column story of the event. Not to be outdone, the *Post-Dispatch* city editor ordered the reporter who had been present to write a story. The reporter appealed to Bovard. "The propriety of your being a guest of those we frequently assail may be open to question—as the city editor should have perceived," Bovard said. "But there would be no shadow of a doubt of the indecency of getting a story by violating your promise. The *Post-Dispatch* is bound by the code of honor it wants others to observe."⁴⁴

Even to obtain a beat, Bovard refused to allow his men to resort to deceptive methods. When Raymond Crowley learned that a college of physicians was awarding fake diplomas to inadequately trained students who expected to use their diplomas for questionable purposes, he asked Bovard's permission to enroll in the guise of a

⁴³ *Goldfish Bowl*, V (September, 1938), No. 41, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

student in order to collect the evidence for an exposé. Bovard refused, and a rival newspaper, which eventually used the ruse, broke one of the sensational stories of the period.

Another executive trait for which Bovard was best known in American journalism was his ability to find and develop talent. His staff was considered one of the greatest ever assembled.⁴⁵ During his editorship, the *Post-Dispatch* became a magic word in New York, Washington, Chicago, and Philadelphia. A record of service on the *Post-Dispatch* under Bovard became a most impressive credential. Indeed, according to Crowley, a connection with the Pulitzer paper opened doors and news sources that few other newspaper names could. A list of former *Post-Dispatch* men who went to higher positions in journalism includes Frederick Brennan and Sam Hellman, Hollywood writers; columnists Marquis Childs and Lowell Mellett; Richard Stokes, playwright and critic; Jack Alexander and Rufus Jarman of the *Saturday Evening Post*; Roy Alexander, Lawrence Laybourne, and Otto Fuerbringer of *Time*; Robert L. Taylor and Richard O. Boyer of the *New Yorker*; Paul Palmer of *Reader's Digest*; Tom Sears of *Newsweek*; the late author Silas Bent; John G. Neihardt, poet and author; Henry La Cossit, writer; and Charles G. Ross, President Harry S. Truman's Presidential press secretary. Other reporters of high caliber—as Frank A. Behymer, Carlos Hurd, Sam Shelton, Rogers, and Anderson—stayed with the paper.

Bovard sought diligently to assess correctly the strongest abilities of his men, assigning them to work

⁴⁵ *Newsweek*, XII (August 8, 1938), No. 6, pp. 24-25.

for which, in his judgment, they seemed best fitted. This was one key to his success with his staff, for his judgment in placing men was usually sound. In the early 'thirties, Marquis Childs was writing socio-political background material for the Sunday magazine. When the movie critic resigned, Childs applied to Bovard for that post; but Bovard considered him better suited to more serious topics. "Childs," he said, "you don't want to write about motion pictures. I'll have to find something for you." Within a few weeks, Childs was assigned to the Washington bureau.⁴⁶

Richard L. Stokes had worked his way up as drama and music critic until he was receiving \$100.00 a week. After working quite a while at this figure without being advanced, Stokes asked Bovard whether there was any chance for an increase. "No," said Bovard. "I can't see your work as worth more than a hundred dollars a week to us." But he soon made the arrangements with F. D. White for Stokes's transfer to the New York *Evening World*, where Stokes found the opportunities he was seeking. Bovard did not want to keep a man from advancement even if it meant losing him.

The managing editor made it a policy to reward men generously and promptly for exceptional work. This generosity extended to expense accounts, vacations, and leaves. John Rogers received a year's salary bonus for his work in the Kelley kidnapping case. Damon Kerby found a check for \$50.00 in his typewriter the morning after the dirigible Hindenburg exploded. Almost alone in the office when the news came in, Kerby, a sports writer, had got out an extra.⁴⁷ Childs had an

⁴⁶ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*

⁴⁷ Perrin to the author, December 3, 1951.

idea for a novel and approached Bovard with the then unheard-of request for time off to write his book. Sympathetic, Bovard arranged the leave, not only for this book, but for other books of Childs's that followed. He was liberal on the subject of expense accounts, too. When Brandt told him that a month's trip to Russia had cost \$3,064.00, Bovard replied, "I think that was quite modest."⁴⁸

Striving for higher standards of education for news workers, Bovard established the rule that no inexperienced men without college degrees would be hired in his department.⁴⁹ As early as his city editor days he remained deeply interested in the welfare of newspaper editorial workers, and he progressively raised salaries in order to attract and hold competent and talented journalists. The *Post-Dispatch* became known as one of the highest paying newspapers in the country,⁵⁰ a reputation that did much to aid Bovard's ability to maintain a fine staff. Another factor was tenure, an established Pulitzer policy. The *Post-Dispatch* in 1953 had a sizable fifty-year club.

The managing editor himself was often reported to be the highest-salaried managing editor in the country. In predepression years his income amounted to \$75,000.00 annually, and this figure did not include his annual bonus.⁵¹ He and other executives, under the provision of Pulitzer's will, received apportionments of the an-

⁴⁸ Brandt to *id.*, January 18, 1949. The managing editor was sometimes needlessly extravagant with expenditures for information. Once, he wanted to check the correct spelling of Fiorello La Guardia, so he telephoned the Washington bureau for the information.

⁴⁹ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*; Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *loc. cit.*, 75.

⁵¹ James T. Keller, treasurer, is the authority for this statement.

nual earnings. These were not distributed equally, for the men deemed to have done the best jobs received the larger shares. Since Bovard was considered a leading producer, however, his share was usually among the largest.⁵² A list of salaries released by the Treasury Department for the year 1934 showed Bovard's salary as \$52,019.00, exclusive of corporate dividends and bonuses. The only other managing editor listed who received more was F. J. Hause of the *New York Daily News*.⁵³

Because of his high goals and his desire to improve the lot of newspaper workers, Bovard favored the American Newspaper Guild. A Guild unit was organized at the *Post-Dispatch* before he resigned,⁵⁴ but there seems to have been little enthusiasm for it, apparently because Bovard's and Pulitzer's liberal policy was trusted. The managing editor's resignation in 1938, however, was followed by large-scale enrollment, and for the first time, the Pulitzer Publishing Company entered into a contract⁵⁵ which gave editorial workers higher compensation for the first four years of employment than the Guild had previously succeeded in negotiating.⁵⁶

Employees of the *Post-Dispatch* led St. Louis and the country in organizing to improve the economic status of reporters. Previously, similar movements had arisen in connection with the International Typographical Union, but the so-called "St. Louis Plan" of 1919, which attracted wide attention and support from

⁵² A. G. Lincoln to the author, January 1, 1949.

⁵³ *Editor and Publisher*, LXIX (January 18, 1936), No. 3, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Ray L. Kringer to the author, November 30, 1949.

⁵⁵ *Guild Reporter*, August 22, 1938, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *loc. cit.*, 75.

management, was independent. Stokes wrote its constitution and became its first president. Rogers and Anderson were active in the leadership. The constitution recognized the public service quality of newspaper editorial work, emphasized professional standards, and, without restricting individual rights, gave the power of dealing with employers to its officers. Its aim was to encourage sympathetic employer-employee co-operation, and it repudiated pressure tactics. Managing Editor Bovard happened to be on vacation when the men organized, and he was called home to meet with them. A "memorial" asked him and the publisher to note the discrepancy in the advance of prices for living and the advance in salaries. Bovard agreed to a 20 per cent retroactive bonus and an average raise of 10 per cent. Organized with the St. Louis plan as the nucleus,⁵⁷ affiliated groups sprang up in other cities under the title of the American Journalists' Association, but the prosperity of the 'twenties discouraged their development.

The depression years and the Roosevelt recovery program brought the Guild. Bovard sincerely believed it a good thing for newspapermen and predicted that in time it would prove to be good for newspapers, too. "The ideals for newspapers which the masses of newspapermen hold are high," he said. "And for that reason I expect that the Guild will in time become influential in elevating the tone of the press as a whole, and aid in making it more journalistic and less commercial."⁵⁸ After his death, the *Post-Dispatch* Guild

⁵⁷ Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America* (New York, 1947), 676-77; Richard L. Stokes to the author, August 27, 1952.

⁵⁸ *Guild Reporter*, August 22, 1938.

unit established the Oliver K. Bovard Scholarship in journalism at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

It was Bovard's practice, and it became a tradition, that men only were to be employed for the general run of news work. For years no woman had desk space in Bovard's newsroom, though women filled places in society and magazine work. Carlos Hurd could recall only three women whom Bovard used on news assignments during his entire career. Marguerite Martyn Kenamore, employed as an artist, developed as a talented writer of general news and women's page features. Rose Marion became a general reporter, who covered special assignments in East St. Louis. Mabel Green was employed first on the women's page staff, but she pestered Bovard until he gave her a difficult detective job promising her a news staff position if she succeeded. She did succeed—by finding the missing defendant in an alienation-of-affections suit.⁵⁹ Lorene Squire—another woman whom Bovard encouraged—was not a news writer, but a photographer, whose pictures of wild fowl in motion attracted Bovard's interest. He published several roto-gravure displays of her pictures and persuaded her to make a photographic expedition to his own favorite hunting grounds in Saskatchewan.⁶⁰

Bovard's aversion to women on his staff may be attributed to his basic chivalry toward the fair sex. It was

⁵⁹ Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 233-34.

⁶⁰ Lorene Squire, *Wildfowling with a Camera* (New York, 1938).

only fair to subject women reporters to the same rigors of the job as men, but he personally could not bring himself to do it.⁶¹ Two men were to be hanged for murder, and for some unaccountable reason, Bovard decided that the story might be more interesting if written from a woman's viewpoint. He asked Marguerite Martyn to go, and she reluctantly agreed. On the day of the hanging, she gathered up her copy paper, pencils, and hat, knowing the boss was watching her but paying no attention. It was an assignment, and she had a wholesome respect for O. K. B. A few minutes before she was to leave, Bovard called out, "Miss Martyn, take your hat off. Hurd, get over to the county jail and cover that hanging." Hurd went and reported it the worst hanging he had ever witnessed.

Furthermore, Bovard found it difficult to discipline or fire women in the same manner as men. Margaret Allen Ruhl, the society editor, had a woman space reporter of suburban society news who fell into various lawless ways that eventually led to her arrest.

When she learned that constables were being sent over to make the arrest, Mrs. Ruhl, in a panic, told her story to the assistant managing editor, Dwight Perrin. He dragged her by the coat sleeve over to Bovard's desk, sat her down, and left her with no alternative. She had to tell the boss.

"If she were a man, I'd drop her out on Twelfth Street with no compunction, but what does one do with a woman?" mused Bovard. Calling a conference, Bovard learned from J. T. Keller, the treasurer, that the woman's salary had been garnisheed fifty-two times in

⁶¹ Mrs. Margaret Ruhl to the author, July 17, 1952.

the past year. After messages to Pulitzer at Bar Harbor, the decision was finally reached to give the woman a man's treatment—Mrs. Ruhl had to fire her.⁶²

As an executive, Bovard was able to delegate responsibility, to give his men complete support, and yet to maintain firm control. He knew how to get the most out of his staff individually and collectively. As a developer of talent, morale, and loyalty, he had few equals and perhaps no superiors. While drilling his men in the techniques of craftsmanship, he never permitted them to forget the high standards of professional ethics. He appeared personally and sincerely interested in the work and promise of each man. He was a stern taskmaster, demanding hard work and long hours. His praise, given sparingly, was honest, and because it was based on the highest traditions of journalism, it was deeply appreciated. To all, he imparted some of his conviction that newspaper work was a public service and that newspapermen must have something of evangelical zeal. For most of his men he put zest and purpose into journalism. To some he was an idol.

As a journalistic craftsman of high talents, as an executive, and as a teacher, Bovard reached his highest attainments. He went a long way toward making journalism—at least on the *Post-Dispatch*—truly a profession.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Interpretation, Ideals, and Ideologies

BOVARD WAS NOT CONTENT with the ephemeral news crusade against social evils, or with the spectacular coup. He looked beyond the day's overt events with a desire to integrate the news, to point up its present and future significance to the reader. He believed a newspaper ought to be every man's university, functioning as an educational, cultural force to supply those things that men could or did not get out of schools. It was with this function in mind that he designed the Fiftieth Anniversary number in 1928, with its ambitious symposium of original articles by the great thinkers of the world. This 232-page paper was the largest single edition ever put out by a St. Louis newspaper.

In the 'thirties he became more and more interested in interpreting the socio-economic background of the news. The depression, the American recovery program, the Communist experiment in Russia, the socialist experiment in Scandinavia, the rise of fascism, the Spanish civil war, and the Sino-Japanese conflict—all brought into sharp focus in the day's news complex political and economic problems, new and conflicting ideologies. These perplexing and dynamic issues needed to be explained clearly if the man on the street was to under-

stand them, and Bovard conceived it to be the duty of the newspaper to minimize public confusion, to clarify the complex, and to furnish strong leadership. He had great contempt for the kind of journalism that "writes down" to the reader, but he had faith in the intelligence and good judgment of men to find a way out of the troubles besetting the world only if they could be adequately enlightened. Thus he saw the need for, and was among the earlier advocates of, the qualified report, interpretation, or "exposition" (the term he preferred) of the "hard" news.

Earlier Bovard had devised a powerful instrument for thus instructing his readers—an instrument that was developed by the need for interpretation during this period. This was known inside the office as the "Dignity Page." It was the first page, or the title page, of the editorial section, which, because it was a unique development of Bovard's, remained under the supervision of the news and not the editorial department. It originated, according to S. R. Stanard, from a section of the first Sunday country edition, edited by Joseph N. Adams, and was made up of what was known to the trade as "filler"—really clippings from the London service. Bovard made it a thought-provoking Sunday page, buying for it articles of opinion and interpretation in the fields of economics, history, political science, and religion. Eventually the page became a daily feature; and as it grew world-wide in scope, recognized authorities in specialized fields and prominent men in politics and literature were invited to contribute. Besides instructing his readers, Bovard made the page fulfill a need that the syndicated columnists realized dur-

ing the same time. It became an important vehicle for news appraisal, and an effective complement to serious, interpretive content in the news section.

More than a year ahead of time Bovard made comprehensive plans for the fiftieth anniversary edition, to be published in December, 1928. The edition would not only survey the half-century of history, but would also look into the future. He sent Clair Kenamore to Europe in 1927 to invite "the principal minds of our times" to answer the question, "whence [civilization] has come and where it is leading us." Those selected were leading figures in the world of scholarship and literature rather than political leaders of the hour. Some of the contributors were Maxim Gorky, James Harvey Robinson, Guglielmo Ferrero, Bertrand Russell, Benedetto Croce, Albert Einstein, J. B. S. Haldane, Sir Philip Gibbs, H. G. Wells, André Siegfried, and Dean William R. Inge. The essays were published in an illustrated section called "The Drift of Civilization," with subdivisions on "The Future of Man," "The Future of Science," and "The Future of America."¹ The symposium was an impressive foreshadowing of scientific and cultural advancement, and it was well received over the country and in Europe. Simon and Schuster brought out the essays in book form a few months later.²

The Lingle murder focused nationwide attention upon Chicago and inspired Bovard to send Paul Y. Anderson there to find underlying causes, after Rogers had unmasked Lingle's connections with the under-

¹ See *Post-Dispatch*, December 9, 1928.

² Contributors to the fiftieth anniversary number of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, *The Drift of Civilization* (New York, 1929).

world. Anderson wrote an extensive sociological analysis called "Chicago—An American Phenomenon," which filled three pages of the editorial section of August 3, 1930. This story illustrated the broad range of Anderson's talents and furnished a prime example of what Bovard meant by going beneath the surface news. Gang wars, the Lingle affair, and other outward manifestations of internal evils hinted at unusual conditions. What were the causes? Who were the ringleaders? What strange forces were at work behind the scenes? These were questions any reader might ask, and few, if any, reporters were making an effort to provide the answers. Anderson found the explanation by tracing the rise of police-protected violence and gangsterism and the development of "Big Bill" Thompson's political alliance with the Insull empire. Thus the Insull interests had come to dominate the government and to control both parties, business, and public utilities in Chicago and the surrounding area. The Chicago newspapers as leaders of public opinion and civic-minded citizens decried the crime and corruption, but they shied away from fixing political responsibility. They denounced the system, it seemed to Anderson, but ignored the basic causes. Often the very forces that demanded a "clean-up" of the city supported the franchises that gave Insull a perpetual transportation monopoly. Against this analytical background, Anderson sketched in striking contrasts the physical splendor and achievement of the city on a scale "hardly equaled in a similar area on the planet." Yet back of such a magnificent panorama of wealth and power lived more than three million people—"a majority in poverty, many in destitution, and thousands in

crime." Anderson lived to see subsequent history record the downfall of Capone, Thompson, and Insull.³

Managing Editor Bovard's sharp news sense made him among the first to recognize the significance of the great depression. All newspaper readers were economically affected, and many were becoming confused either by the oversimplifications or by the conflicting and complex data being printed in the media of information. By asking his staff in 1931 to consider the depression newsworthy, Bovard hoped to clarify in some degree the uncertainty that existed in the public mind. "The depression is news, and it is a newspaper's business to tell what can be done about it,"⁴ he said.

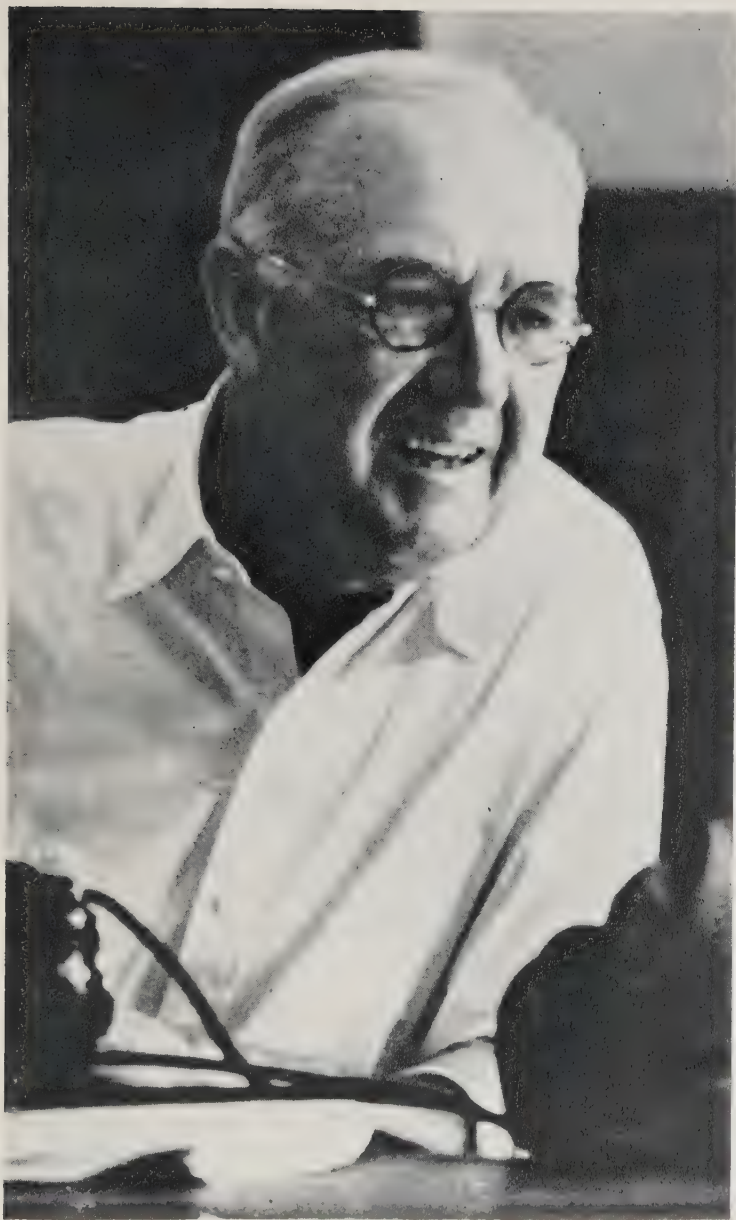
Dean William Inge's essays on the machine age had influenced Bovard's thinking. During the late 'twenties, moreover, Ross, Brandt, and others in Washington had written numerous articles for the editorial title section about the distribution of national income. As the first signs of depression appeared, the Washington bureau made detailed analyses of the symptoms—unemployment, demands of organized labor, the tariff problem, and other issues.⁵ Charles G. Ross's "The Country's Plight—What Can Be Done About It?" was really an abstract and digest of much of what had been published before. But it was Bovard's idea to call it to the attention of the Congress which was to convene a few weeks later to consider depression legislation.⁶ The article numbered some eighteen thousand words and spread

³ John Boettiger, *Jake Lingle* (New York, 1931), 177-88.

⁴ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 6.

⁵ Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949.

⁶ *Ibid.*; Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*, 30, quotes Ross as being the first to say that Bovard had a considerable part in planning the article.



O.K.B. AT HIS DESK

over three full pages of the November 29, 1931, edition.

The essay pictured the situation as a challenge to democratic government and to the capitalist system. Wide disagreement about what was to be done made it imperative that the people, and thus their representatives, should know the facts if they were to deal intelligently with the problems. Ross presented his facts carefully; and only after scholarly analysis did he draw conclusions:

Economy in government could contribute nothing toward relieving the general depression, for the only real economy lay in reducing appropriations for future wars. Fundamentally the root cause of both overproduction and unemployment was the maldistribution of wealth, accentuated and accelerated by the machine. To finance recovery and to equalize the distribution of wealth the government should borrow and increase taxes. The government might help further by lowering the tariff, installing the five-day week, repealing prohibition, and providing for public ownership of public utilities; but the solution lay primarily in the hands of industry. Business should sacrifice dividends to restore the balance between production and consumption; it should manufacture only enough to meet the anticipated demand; and it should resolve some of its issues with labor by adopting the five-day week, minimum hours, and maximum pay. Fundamental demands of labor, particularly the "right to work" should be given serious consideration by management, the essay argued. Although restoration of world prosperity would help the United States, the concentration of wealth in com-

paratively few hands in our own country must be re-adjusted. Furthermore, the question of whether the machine is to be the servant or the master of the people must be satisfactorily worked out. In brief, a solution to the problem of the great depression could be found, if as Justice Louis D. Brandeis said, we could "amend men's social and economic ideals," instead of amending the Constitution.

Ross's searching essay, foreshadowing as it did many of the measures taken by Congress, and later by the New Deal, to combat the depression, won the Pulitzer Prize. More than eight thousand copies were published in pamphlet form. For his "people's university," Bovard had the ideal schoolmaster-journalist in Charles G. Ross. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Missouri, and for ten years a faculty member of the first School of Journalism there, Ross had in his make-up an unusual combination of abilities—those of a scholarly and inquisitive thinker and of a vivid writer. Ross's political philosophy was in the tradition of Holmes, Brandeis, La Follette, and Norris. As a newspaperman he was a perfectionist—always seeking the precise phrase, always careful to be accurate and scrupulously fair, and never drawing a conclusion not justified by the facts.⁷

At the time the problem of the depression was absorbing his attention at home, Bovard was looking abroad for possible solutions. He had an editor's curiosity about the Russian form of government and he made unusual efforts to inform himself about it. While

⁷ Raymond P. Brandt, "Charles G. Ross: We Worked Together," in *P-D Notebook*, January, 1951, p. 9; *Post-Dispatch*, December 6, 1950.

he felt that much could be learned from it, he never considered it as a cure for the ills of the world. To educate readers, he gave space to Stalin's addresses and the full text of the Soviet constitution—one of the few editors in the U. S. to do so. In sending Raymond P. Brandt to Russia in 1931, Bovard urged him to stress the theme, if justified, that economically the United States was going to the left, while Russia was tending to the right. Bovard was prophetic, for, at that time, Brandt found the thesis to be true.⁸ Furthermore, he believed and he asked Brandt to stress his idea that Russia was slowly retreating from impracticable, idealistic Communism, just as England and America were slowly moving away from unrestricted capitalism. All three nations were seeking a tenable, middle ground free from the obvious, serious faults of both systems.⁹ Brandt's articles came to Bovard's desk during the late summer, when many of the people he wanted to inform were out of the city; so he held up their publication until fall.¹⁰

Bovard himself paid several visits to Russia, once in 1934 with Mrs. Bovard and again the following year alone. On this occasion he arrived in Moscow in time for the May Day demonstrations.¹¹ The vast hydro-electric power developments, the conversion of palaces into libraries and hospitals for the people, and other similar democratic movements for the betterment of the masses were among the things that appealed to him.

⁸ Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949, November 16, 1951.

⁹ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, August 15, 1931, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, in the possession of Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., St. Louis, Missouri. This correspondence is not now available to scholars. Also, Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949, November 16, 1951, stressed this point.

¹⁰ See Brandt's series, "Russia in Transition," in *Post-Dispatch*, September–December, 1931, *passim*. ¹¹ St. Louis *Star-Times*, May 3, 1935.

Yet, he found that Communist theory differed from practice. The aristocratic ruling class under the czars merely had been replaced by a much larger bureaucracy, which, Bovard thought, was in many instances as tyrannical and exploitative in its treatment of the masses as were the leaders of the old regime. He saw too, that despite government denials, the church was being persecuted and religious teaching in the schools was being banned.

The idea of a middle ground between socialism and capitalism was advanced by the managing editor again in the summer of 1931 when Marquis Childs was making plans for a study of Sweden. The idea had occurred to Bovard during a trip to that country in the summer of 1930, and in later discussions, he found that Childs had the same plan.¹² Childs's book, *Sweden: The Middle Way*, first published in 1936, became a best seller. It prompted the United States government to send a special commission abroad to study co-operative systems in Europe. A later book by Childs, *This Is Democracy*, which described collective bargaining in Scandinavia, was dedicated to Bovard.

As the depression wore on and the Roosevelt administration failed to accomplish all the results hoped for, disagreement arose among the *Post-Dispatch* editors, as indeed among the economics experts, over the nature of the country's plight and what should be done about it. The paper could enlighten its readers in the news pages concerning the country's economic problems; but how,

¹² Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, August 15, 1931, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

without concerted agreement, could it point the way? In directing the gathering, editing, and display of the news, Bovard's authority extended to all classes of news and to all departments of the paper engaged in handling facts, but not to the department which led public opinion. It was Bovard, who each day from hundreds of thousands of words pouring over telegraph wires, from the mail, and from reporters' typewriters, selected a picture for his readers of the significant happenings. This task, in itself, was an exacting one, carrying great responsibility and requiring unusual talents. But for Bovard, as for the other editors, to this task was added the injunction of the *Post-Dispatch* platform, "never be satisfied with merely printing the news."¹³ The responsibility to interpret and to lead was clear. But along what course, and in what direction?

Let us go back a few years to trace the background of discord. Clark McAdams, who had succeeded Johns, as editorial page editor, fought with crusading spirit and rare humor for the freedom of the common man. In his column, "Just a Minute," he described the battle between the reactionaries and the liberals of the Hoover administration as the issue "between the Country and the Country Club." He changed Johns's stolid, conservative editorial page to a brighter one that advocated the "New Liberalism."¹⁴ During his first year in the editor's chair, he and Bovard crusaded for justice for Sacco and

¹³ Ben Reese, who succeeded Bovard and who served many years as his city editor, once tried to edit the famous platform. "The *Post-Dispatch*," he said, "will never be satisfied. Period." Cited by Roger Butterfield in "An Editor Must Have No Friends," *Collier's*, CXXXVI (December 23, 1950), No. 26, p. 49.

¹⁴ See Samuel Tait, Jr., "The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*," in *The American Mercury*, XXII (April, 1931), No. 88, pp. 403-20.

Vanzetti.¹⁵ The two editors were close friends and hunting companions for years.¹⁶ But as time went on, Bovard and McAdams agreed less frequently. When disagreements flared, Bovard said little, but sulked and pointedly avoided McAdams for weeks. Then he would propose lunch together or a hunting jaunt, as though nothing had happened. Perhaps their first serious divergence of views occurred in the 1928 Presidential campaign, when Bovard supported Hoover and McAdams, Smith. This time the managing editor went into his shell and left on an extended trip to South America. When he got back, all was apparently forgotten; he resumed his daily lunches with McAdams, Fitzpatrick, and Coghlan of the editorial staff. With the coming of the New Deal, both Bovard and McAdams looked to Roosevelt with hope. But before long Bovard became impatient, blaming Roosevelt for not nationalizing the banks and taking other strong measures. He thought of him as a "dilettante," "a mere actor," and an "American Kerensky." McAdams, however, remained ardently devoted to Roosevelt principles. In addition to arguments on politics, another subject of discord arose between the two editors. Bovard, who was ambitious for control of the editorial page, apparently tried to interfere, which, naturally, McAdams resented. This feeling, too, contributed to frequent quarrels over policy.

¹⁵ Tait, *ibid.*, states that the editorial page carried on the crusade "with almost no aid from others on the staff." However, correspondence between Silas Bent and Bovard, Bent Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, indicates that Bovard took keen interest in the crusade. The paper's news pages show the crusade was a joint effort.

¹⁶ Laura McAdams' *Marais Temps Clair* (St. Louis, 1944) is a book of memories of the McAdams' hunting lodge and clubhouse in St. Charles County. The Bovards were members.

Joseph Pulitzer II had backed Roosevelt in his first election because he appeared to be a traditional party man, but the publisher soon found he could not go with Roosevelt all the way. He distilled a middle-of-the-road policy¹⁷ to the right of both Bovard and McAdams. The political cleavage placed Pulitzer on the right, McAdams, in the center, and Bovard, to the left. In the conduct of the paper, Pulitzer, feeling his apprenticeship over, sought more control. For years almost complete management had been in the hands of Johns and Bovard.¹⁸ When Johns retired, Pulitzer assumed more responsibility and as a result McAdams, the successor, never realized the extent of freedom that Johns had enjoyed. McAdams, however, having been on the paper as long as Bovard, chafed under the new arrangement. Eventually, in 1934 he was moved to the position of associate editor and was replaced by Ross.

Beneath the bickering, Bovard had great regard and affection for McAdams. When in 1936, a year after McAdams' death, the election returns gave Roosevelt a landslide vote, Bovard walked into the editorial room and posted on a bulletin board a message to McAdams:

Dear Mac:

"The issue is: Country, 523;
Country Club, 8."

When *Time* attributed the expression to Bovard, he disclaimed credit for the phrase, explaining how

¹⁷ Jack Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *loc. cit.*, 75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6; Bent, *Newspaper Crusaders*, 40-41. Villard, *The Disappearing Daily*, 119, state that the younger Pulitzer gave his executives free rein.

McAdams had originated it, and how he was merely making a news report about the election to an editorial writer "in terms intended to be both clear and complimentary." In clarifying the *Time* story Bovard wrote acidly, "It is perhaps too much to expect accuracy and comprehension of subject in keyhole reporting, but at least fairness to the dead might be hoped for. The omission [of the phrase, 'The issue is'] not only left *Time*'s item without point but withheld credit from a writer whose wit and insight had compressed volumes into a single incisive sentence, which illuminated the murky economics of the time like a flash of lightning."¹⁹

While Bovard could agree wholeheartedly with the spirit of his "Message to McAdams," he had no enthusiasm for the man elected by the country. Neither did Pulitzer, who had supported Landon; but both men disliked the President for opposite reasons. Pulitzer thought the recovery program tended too far toward socialism; Bovard thought it was not tending far enough. However, this was but one symptom of the growing rift between them. As time passed, the editor found himself more and more out of accord with Pulitzer and dissatisfied with the general policies of the paper.

On the morning of July 29, 1938, Bovard notified the staff of his resignation. Written in blue pencil on a piece of copy paper, the bulletin board notice virtually stopped work on the first edition.

To the Staff:

With regret I have to tell you that I have resigned because of irreconcilable differences of opinion with Mr. Pulitzer as to the

¹⁹ *Time*, XXVIII (December 21, 1936), No. 25, p. 7.

general conduct of the paper and am leaving the office August 13. I recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of ownership and make no complaint. . . .

The rest of the note, signed "Faithfully yours, O. K. Bovard," paid tribute to the staff.²⁰ The page one news also included an announcement by Pulitzer.

It is with deep regret that I have accepted the resignation of Mr. Bovard. . . . Certain honest differences of opinion had developed between us. In the resignation of Mr. Bovard the *Post-Dispatch* loses a great editor and a great public servant.²¹

Shock and gloom filled the atmosphere. For most of the editorial workers Bovard so symbolized the institution that the two were synonymous. It was hard for the men to imagine a *Post-Dispatch* without Bovard. Certainly it seemed to Marquis Childs that it would never be the same.²² The resignation ended forty years of service, twenty-eight as managing editor. Among these thoughts ran an undercurrent of speculation which the reluctance of both Bovard and Pulitzer to make public their points of difference naturally aroused.

During the next few days a large segment of the staff hastened to join the Guild. The publisher placed a notice on the newsroom wall. "The *Post-Dispatch* platform which I placed at its masthead 27 years ago shall continue to be this newspaper's guide and its only guide." He designated Benjamin H. Reese, the city editor for twenty-one years, Bovard's successor.

Bovard's leave-taking on August 13 was a sad, un-

²⁰ *Post-Dispatch*, July 30, 1938; *Editor and Publisher*, LXXI (August 6, 1938), No. 32, p. 6. ²¹ *Ibid.*; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 30, 1938.

²² Also Anderson, "Bovard of the *Post-Dispatch*," *loc. cit.*, and Reese to the author, January 23, 1952, expressed similar views.

forgettable occasion. The editor walked around the room saying goodbye and shaking hands. Only one man continued working. He was Herbert Trask, Jr., busy at his typewriter. Bovard laid his hand gently on Trask's shoulder. "I wept just a little, and I suspect that some of the others did too," Lawrence Laybourne recalled. He had a photograph of his chief, and walking up to his desk, asked him to sign it. What Bovard said as he autographed the picture Laybourne recorded on the back. "It has been fine to have you young men here. . . . The future of the country is more important than anything that is past. The future is in your hands." Years later his words may have sounded like those of a commencement speaker's, Laybourne said, "but I remember vividly that he said it as though he meant it, and because I stood in such awe of him as a person, I was greatly impressed."²³ Bovard left immediately for New York and a few days later sailed to join Mrs. Bovard in London.

The *Star-Times* of July 30, 1938, hastened into print with a tribute:

Few St. Louisans know him, yet nearly all know of him as the mysterious but mighty figure behind the news policy of a newspaper nationally recognized as one of the best. . . .

Any man must have strong convictions to pass up a job recently paying \$55,000 a year . . . because of differences of opinion with his employer. Such a man is Oliver K. Bovard. With his resignation the work is ended of those four titans of journalism—Johns, White, Steigers, Bovard—who, with Joseph Pulitzer, the elder, created the modern day *Post-Dispatch*.

Ralph Coghlan in a long *Post-Dispatch* editorial,

²³ Lawrence Laybourne to the author, January 13, 1949.

August 14, 1938, surveyed his career and concluded with an assessment of his qualities.

Obviously Mr. Bovard brought to the task of editorship many fine qualities—a passion for public affairs, and a desire to do something about them in the interest of the general welfare; the power of decision; coolness of judgment in times of great stress; tenacity of purpose; intellectual integrity; a fierce hatred of injustice, hypocrisy and corruption; and an unerring sense of good taste.

The *Post-Dispatch* salutes Oliver K. Bovard!

However, the tribute that most warmed his heart was homage paid him by the staff in the form of a hand-lettered testimonial, written on vellum and bearing a long list of signatures. "Mr. Bovard," it opened, "the staff comes now to say good-bye," and it closed:

You brought to your office a panoply of qualities: Integrity, blazing enthusiasm, thoroughness, accuracy, a truly luminous vision, and steadying it all, a certainty of judgment that has never known hesitation once the conclusion was reached.

You have done the day's work, not as an essay to win the applause of the moment, though there has been many a brilliant coup and many an ovation, but as a contribution to human progress.

There are many schools of journalism. The third floor of the Post-Dispatch, under the preceptorship of Bovard, became, we feel and frankly boast, the Oxford of newspaperdom.

Because Bovard had reached the age of retirement, a simple announcement of his intention to leave would perhaps have been accepted quietly. As it was, however, the affair stirred wide discussion and provoked varied explanations of the nature of the differences of opinion which Bovard had described as "irreconcilable," and

which Pulitzer had termed "honest." The press reaction varied from mild neutrality to outright adverse criticism in some so-called liberal quarters. One view held that Bovard had quit rather than submit to interference in running his department; at the other extreme was the report that he had been discharged. Paul Y. Anderson in the *Star-Times* of August 3 and in *The Nation* of August 13 said the differences between the two men arose over relatively liberal and conservative standards in the management, accentuated by a wide divergence of economic and political views. It was Anderson's opinion that the *Post-Dispatch* was verging from its traditional position as a great liberal paper, that the first indication of this trend was shown in the removal of Clark McAdams from his editorial page position four years previously, and that consequently, when Pulitzer began to "assert" himself by taking over a larger voice in news policy, Bovard refused to remain on the job except on his own terms. In these years, Anderson wrote, members of the staff had the distinct impression that Pulitzer was apprehensive over the increasing "radicalism" of his managing editor.

Anderson's interpretation seemed to be largely valid, except that his argument appeared somewhat biased in favor of Bovard, as might be expected. For instance, there were apparently more basic reasons for the replacement of McAdams than a difference in political views with the publisher.²⁴ Furthermore, Anderson himself had denied the assumption that Pulitzer would discharge a man purely because of a difference of political views. Four years earlier, Bovard had ordered Anderson

²⁴ See above, p. 173.

to cease his writing for *The Nation*. "We think you are overworking yourself," he told him. On this occasion Anderson ridiculed the suggestion that interests which he had treated "none too tenderly" in his *Nation* articles had finally caught up with his chief. "Don't believe a word of it," he said. "The *Post-Dispatch* cannot be 'reached.' I have seen that tried often enough to know."²⁵ On the other hand, those who believed Bovard had been discharged argued that he was at the height of his powers and had no intention of leaving.²⁶ Certainly it seemed true that a man who loved power so much would not surrender it easily.

Oswald Garrison Villard in "Issues and Men,"²⁷ expressed the general view: "There are so few really fearless and liberal journals left that the fate of any one of them is of great moment—indeed it is a matter of national concern." "I have an idea," he wrote with considerable insight, "that Mr. Bovard's retirement is not due merely to differences of opinion with Mr. Pulitzer but also to an increasing displeasure with the state of journalism in general."

To trace the roots of the growing divergence of views between the two men, one must go back to the early days of the depression. As has been indicated, the economic condition of the country had complicated the problem of guiding a newspaper's editorial policy. At the same time the problem of keeping the business side financially solvent became a cause for increasing concern. The old standards or principles which had

²⁵ *Time*, XXXII (August 8, 1938), No. 6, pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Marquis Childs is among the authorities for this view.

²⁷ *The Nation*, CXLVII (August 27, 1938), No. 9, p. 206.

proved so helpful in the predepression days did not seem to apply. Sharp conflicts had developed over the causes of and remedies for the situation. To what extent could American government constitutionally act to alleviate the distressing condition? Editors who considered themselves liberal wavered between the extremes of traditional liberalism and a new philosophy which advocated more socialism. But this new philosophy called itself liberal, too. When the New Deal introduced what seemed to be a new theory of the function of government, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., turned in perplexity for guidance to the platform of the paper, and from it he decided on a course of supporting some Roosevelt measures and opposing others. He described his stand as that which "supports the use of the power of government to remedy financial, social, or political evils, but still within the framework of the traditional American procedure," and he labeled this view "progressive democracy."²⁸ Thus the *Post-Dispatch* fought controversial New Deal measures, such as the Supreme Court packing bill, but supported collective bargaining, foreign policy, preparedness neutrality, social security, wage-hour legislation, and securities regulation. Such a middle course was not an easy one for Pulitzer, for he was pilloried by the New Dealers whenever the paper said anything in favor of preserving portions of the status quo, and he was attacked by the conservatives when the paper saw merit in a Roosevelt alphabet agency.

As the depression deepened, the plight of the press became more serious, and by 1938 newspapers were losing millions of dollars in advertising. Consolidations and

²⁸ Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *loc. cit.*, 74-75.

outright discontinuances were multiplying. The cost of newsprint and wages soared, and the industry started a general slashing of costs. Such conditions seemed to threaten in some degree the independence of the press. Editors and owners wanted to proceed slowly until they could foresee more clearly the economic future. Such was the view of the country's publishers, and such was substantially Pulitzer's aim as he tried to steer the *Post-Dispatch* through the critical decade without losing ground.

But Pulitzer had grown up on the *Post-Dispatch* under the shadow of the two towering figures of Johns and Bovard. His training and experience had been sound. His capacity for work, his courage, his independence, his common sense, his ability to judge others and appreciate their value, and his open-mindedness had been frequently demonstrated.²⁹ Moreover, he was devoted to his father's journalistic principles. As he gradually accepted more responsibility, he made it a practice to step in only when he felt that policy was being by-passed or that he might improve the paper. He studied the paper and frequently made suggestions which had real merit and indicated unusual grasp of the problems involved. His office memoranda offering criticism were models of tact. They began "Forgive me for suggesting . . .," "It is only my impression . . .," or "My opinion may be wrong, but. . . ." They often requested Bovard to ignore the suggestion if it did not seem sound to him.³⁰ Besides taking the leadership in developing roto-

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri. Correspondence between Pulitzer and his managing editor, 1931 to 1938, includes memoranda of this sort.

gravure, radio, and television, Pulitzer made contributions to the advertising censorship policy and to the format of the paper. He took important stands for editorial independence, once warning the American Newspaper Publisher's Association against a growing tendency toward excessive commercialism which might undermine public confidence. He reminded the publishers they were engaging in the high and responsible calling of journalism and not merely manufacturing a product.³¹ Speaking at his sixtieth birthday dinner in 1945, Pulitzer outlined the three journalistic functions of a newspaper. "First, to report. To report means to tell what happened. Second, to interpret. To interpret means to tell why it happened. And Third, to lead. To lead means to tell what should happen."³² As Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., gradually sought to assume guidance of his newspaper, he honestly tried to see that these functions, along with the business operations, were balanced and synthesized in the making of a greater *Post-Dispatch*.

In the meantime Pulitzer's managing editor was busy exploring political philosophies and systems. Enhanced by the problems of the depression and by his zeal to find a solution to the plight of the country, his interest became intense. Authorities had first attributed the stock market collapse to gambling, maintaining that the country's business still rested on a sound footing. Next, they ceased to be so sure about the soundness, but

³¹ Bent, *Newspaper Crusaders*, 41-42. Pulitzer took another admirable stand in 1940 after a judge had cited Editor Ralph Coghlan and Artist Fitzpatrick for contempt for a privileged criticism of the court's methods. The publisher reprinted the statements in question and placed his signature under them hoping the judge would also include him in the contempt action. Pulitzer was not arrested however, and the Missouri supreme court reversed the adverse decision. See Butterfield, "An Editor Must Have No Friends," *loc. cit.*, 48.

³² Souvenir program of the dinner.

blamed world-wide conditions. Finally, as matters improved only slightly, and as the paradox of want in the midst of plenty became more and more puzzling, the explanation was advanced that perhaps the condition was inherent in our own political system. In the search for cause and effect, many theories were advanced. Two which appealed most to Bovard explained that the depression was caused by maldistribution of wealth, and that widespread unemployment was caused by the machine. Bovard had studied Karl Marx's theories, and had commented that so-called "radicals" were asking whether possibly the time was at hand for the fulfillment of Marx's prophesy, that Capitalism will provide its own grave-diggers.³³ In looking abroad, Bovard sought to make an adaptation which would provide for the United States a middle ground short of sudden political or industrial revolution.

As early as September, 1931, Bovard advanced a program by means of which the government might check the increasing flow of wealth into few hands. This could be done, he said in a memorandum to Pulitzer, by reducing the tariff and taking over the railroads and other natural resources. He seemed to feel that this much might be accomplished without changing the Constitution; but he pointed out that the constitutional guarantees of property rights would not permit the nationalization of such things as food, clothing, and shelter.³⁴ This guarantee also would prevent the govern-

³³ Bovard, *Communism, Capitalism and the Middle Ground*, undated memorandum to Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., 1931. Also Bovard, "Forward with Socialism and Democracy," unpublished MS., St. Louis, March, 1938, p. 20.

³⁴ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, September 7, 1931, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

ment from influencing private and competitive industry in any broad program to prevent or minimize the effect of periodic recurrence of business panics. At this time he apparently was not in favor of amending the Constitution, for he wrote, "To go in overnight for a program of state Socialism, government control or regulation of all indispensable necessities of life, would of course, wreck the country's industrial system, and anyway, the Constitution would not permit it." ³⁵

However, as the efforts of the Roosevelt administration appeared more and more distasteful to Bovard, he changed his mind; by the late 'thirties, he had become convinced that modified socialism ought to be enacted and that the Constitution ought to be amended to enable such legislation. Roosevelt was to him a mere schoolboy tinkering instead of getting down to cases, the "Kerensky of the American revolution," ³⁶ and "at once a renegade rich man and a counterfeit 'friend of the people.' " If he were not the latter, "instead of railing at the Supreme Court, he would have long ago brought about the changes in the Constitution necessary to permit the legislative branch, which he controlled, to enact without fear of invalidation" his whole program of "social justice." ³⁷

As time went on Bovard painstakingly set forth his philosophy in an essay of some length entitled "Forward with Socialism and Democracy." ³⁸ His major purpose was to set down in black and white his views—so often

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*

³⁷ Bovard to Florence D. White, March 24, 1938.

³⁸ Bovard, "Forward with Socialism and Democracy."

the subject of long discussions with Pulitzer—and to submit all his arguments to his chief at one time.³⁹ He also entertained some idea of publishing the essay, perhaps in the editorial title section, or as a monograph.⁴⁰ Referring to it as his “thesis,” he worked on it for more than a year. He circulated it among his friends, inviting their criticisms, and he once told John Neihardt he wanted it ready when the “break comes.” The foreword of the completed work introduced the reader to an investigation “in the method of the newsroom” of “that cataclysmic event,” the depression. The newsroom method, he said, was one of investigation, verification, and publication. “Two wars are going on. The one-column heads show their decline in public interest; but their preferential positions on the front page express a judgment of their importance. Fundamentally they relate to the greatest news story of modern times, the progressive rising of the masses of all peoples against economic oppression, lately become acute through rapid development of labor saving machinery.” The American phase of this story was the most difficult the newsroom had ever had to deal with, he wrote. It was a story “potentially greater in consequence to human affairs than even the World War.” While the elements of this continuing story were treated daily, the end was unpredictable.

The problem of recurring periods of business deflation, a seeming adjunct of the capitalist system, the essay offered, might be solved by expanding the public

³⁹ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, February 3, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁰ *Id.* to Mrs. Adele Starbird, undated letter, in the possession of Mrs. Starbird, St. Louis, Missouri.

ownership of public utilities and major natural resources, and perhaps by taking over operation of the railroads. Manufacturing and many other industries would still provide a vast field for private enterprise. The profits from these industries would furnish new revenue for the government, thus enabling it to repeal some taxes, reduce the national debt, and reserve money for social security and other progressive measures. To make these changes possible, it would be necessary to amend the constitutional guaranty of property rights and the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The constitutional protection of civil rights, however, would remain sacred and inviolate.⁴¹ Bovard explained the main tenets of socialism, contrasted socialism with capitalism, the German Nazi and Italian Fascist dictatorships, and Russian Communism. He rejected Communism as not applicable to the U. S., "because what is going on in that country is an experiment in *complete socialism* enforced by dictatorship, which is not advocated for the United States." A rational degree of socialism applied in time might save and advance human rights, preserve a wholesome measure of capitalism, and eliminate present unjust, impractical relationships between capital and labor. There seemed to be only two alternative cures for the malady of unrestricted capitalism as shown by periodic depressions: one was governmental regulation of privately owned industry—a measure that could be attempted only in a totalitarian state; the other was socialism. Bovard next outlined the stock objections to socialism, and attempted to prove socialism not inconsistent with American principles.

⁴¹ Bovard, "Forward with Socialism and Democracy."

The fourth section of the essay, "Politics, the Press and the People," sought to analyze why the United States did not go forward with democracy and socialism. The people might, if they were properly informed, he said. The press, generally an essential adjunct of democratic government, had so failed in its historic function of supplying adequate information as to subject it to the charge of having defaulted. The press failed, Bovard thought, because it had become cluttered with prejudice and misinformation and because of its progressive commercialization. "As American politics bears little likeness to statesmanship, so the average American city newspaper bears little relationship to journalism. . . . The press . . . like politics, is a business. Its first concern is to 'get the business.' That is, more circulation in order to get more advertising in order to make more profits. . . ." ⁴² While publishing the surface manifestations of public affairs, most newspapers failed to make their significance plain to the people. Often the facts themselves were lost on readers in the mass of trivial news and entertainment features. What of interpretation? Two considerations arose: first, because the newspaper was a business owned by a businessman, it seemed inevitable that the paper's views would reflect the attitudes of its owner; second, it was rare that an owner could separate his views on public questions from his personal interests as a businessman. Hence, the discussion of public affairs in the daily press, once a profession, had become largely a business, too. The American phenomenon of column writing was also a business, Bovard contended. The columnists were highly

⁴² *Ibid.*, Sec. 4, p. 9.

paid; but because their primary motive was to sell their columns to more papers, they dealt largely in generalities, remaining as innocuous as possible. Their combined effect seemed to confuse issues rather than clarify them.

Even should the media of information help the people to understand, the people could make no program without competent leadership, an element sadly lacking, because of practical politics under the two-party system, "bossism," and its influences. As a result, politics had become a business, conducted like a business, to regiment the masses of the voters.

Bovard ended his tract with further pessimism. The problems we face would never be understood or solved by politics of the kind described. The great need was for leaders who, like Abraham Lincoln, would go forward with an idea, undeterred by epithets. The idea would be

that all men are born "free and equal," . . . equally deserving, that is, of an opportunity to make a decent living if they are willing to work for it. That is all that socialism contends for. That is what the golden rule means. . . . Since the beginning of the Christian era that essential rule of conduct for civilized society has been left to the individual conscience. What a spectacle of misery and hopelessness the world presents today after 2000 years of dependence upon voluntary compliance with the injunction. . . .

Socialism seeks to enforce the rule through reasonable application of the power of government.⁴³

Thus it was that Bovard by this time had a program and a plan. His philosophy might be classified as Fabian socialist doctrine, somewhat comparable to the views of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Sec. 4, p. 13.

Norman Thomas or to the principles of the socialistic movements in Sweden and England.⁴⁴ Socialism appealed to his logical mind because, like almost everyone else, he was inclined to believe what complemented or seemed to verify previously established ideas and attitudes. Socialist dogma complemented his theory of economic determinism. Although he had great natural intellectual powers, he had some of the faults of self-education.⁴⁵

Considering himself a philosopher of politics, he developed what was to him a new idea, not realizing that Aristotle, Locke, or Jefferson had better worked out its designs.⁴⁶ On the other hand, socialist doctrine found welcome soil not only in Bovard's fierce hatred of injustice and economic inequality, but also in his zeal for reform that dated back to the days of bicycle journalism and Petie Quinn philosophy.

It also stemmed from the editor's lifelong experience in combatting the evils of corrupt politics and business. These were the views commonly shared by groups of younger, social-conscious, and iconoclastic intellectuals, and the "have nots" of the period. His courage and forthrightness was unusual for a man in his position in life—in comfortable, even wealthy, circumstances, approaching sixty and looking toward the close of his career.

During these years of burning philosophical ferment other changes came over the managing editor. His usually unerring news judgment seemed to suffer lapses.

⁴⁴ Norman Thomas to the author, February 14, 1952. Compare Thomas' *America's Way Out* (New York, 1931) and *A Socialist's Faith* (New York, 1951).

⁴⁵ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*

⁴⁶ Brandt to the author, January 18, 1949.

Marquis Childs, covering a New York strike, was astonished to hear Bovard's voice, telephoning instructions to watch closely for subway activity because he had heard that organized resistance would start there.⁴⁷ During the Spanish war, Pulitzer detected Loyalist-slanting of the news beyond the limits of acceptable interpretation in a series of syndicated articles.⁴⁸ Bovard defended the Kolsov articles by admitting them partisan, but they were so labeled and so chosen by him in preference to Associated Press reports based largely on handouts, because Kolsov's were eye-witness accounts.⁴⁹ Bovard's editorializing, including touches of obvious advocacy, during the campaign against the Court packing bill also were called to his attention by the publisher. "I am as anxious to beat the Court Scheme as you are but . . . am arguing for the man who wants to read what was said, not what the paper thinks of the utterances," Pulitzer reminded Bovard in a memorandum.⁵⁰

Another distinct change was seen in Bovard's developing habit of regarding the paper not only as an extension of his own personality but also as a reflection of his own tastes and ideas. For example, the use of trivial and banal features offended his intelligence, and he felt that most readers likewise took offense at such material. "I must confess I entirely agree with R. J. Henry's kick

⁴⁷ Bovard had a log cabin on his farm. He jokingly told friends that when the revolutionists came to take over, he would tell them he lived in the cabin, not in the big house.

⁴⁸ Joseph Pulitzer, II, to Bovard, December 28, 1937, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁹ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, December 29, 1937, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁵⁰ Joseph Pulitzer, II, to Bovard, March 12, 1937, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

about Gertrude Stein," Pulitzer wrote Bovard. "Seriously, I believe there are many ignorant readers like myself who must strongly object to having this stuff thrown into their faces and who must be humiliated at their inability to understand it. If I may give you my opinion as to this series, I would throw the remaining five articles in the waste-paper basket."⁵¹ Bovard's retort was blue-pencilled across the bottom of his chief's memorandum: "In they go! *But*—other readers who object to having Walter Winchell—horoscopes—race horse tips—inane comics thrown at them; the answer to these critics is that the features they dislike are not for them and they don't have to read them. In respect to features the paper is a cafeteria—something to flatter the taste of every customer." He continued tartly, "One view of G. S. [Gertrude Stein] is that she is a *novel* type of crossword puzzle."

The culmination of this attitude toward the *Post-Dispatch* came when Bovard tried to persuade Pulitzer to commit the paper to his policy of nationalization, somewhat as presented in his thesis. The publisher declined, questioning the wisdom of pledging the paper to such a program before the country was ready for it.⁵² Thus, unable to direct the paper's policy into channels more in line with his convictions, Bovard found himself more and more discontented with his work, more and more impatient and frustrated with "the state of man," with the state of journalism in general, and with the *Post-Dispatch* in particular. He wrote White that he

⁵¹ *Id.* to *id.*, March 11, 1935, *ibid.*

⁵² Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Daniel Fitzpatrick, and Bovard's own statement to Pulitzer in a memorandum of August 3, 1938, are the sources for this account. (See footnote 55 below.)

had come to be so "out of accord with the editorial and general managerial policy of Grasping [the *Post-Dispatch*]" that his "sense of propriety" was undergoing a strain. He began to sense this estrangement in 1935. The feeling was slow at first, but "accelerated by the courses adopted to meet the impact of the depression."⁵³

"You asked me in our long talk whether my desire to withdraw might not be because I thought I had found a 'way out' for the country and the paper would not adopt it," Bovard wrote Pulitzer. "You will remember my answer, and I will repeat it, I do not think I have found a way out. But I have a conviction based on the experience of organized society to date, that the direction of the way out cannot be the course which has brought the country to its present grave condition."⁵⁴ This answer to Pulitzer's question seems to indicate that a more complete response would have been in the affirmative.

These changes which had come over the managing editor were noted by Brandt, Dilliard, Childs, and others. "Many of us who admired him," observed Childs, "felt that in his later years he had permitted his viewpoint to become solidified. We felt that he had begun to see the world from an arbitrary perspective, and we were unhappy over this change."⁵⁵

In addition to the change in Bovard's political views, and his desire to commit the *Post-Dispatch* to them, another factor bearing heavily upon the resignation epi-

⁵³ Bovard to White, March 24, 1938.

⁵⁴ *Id.* to Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., August 3, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁵⁵ Marquis Childs, "Surgeon of Facts," *Post-Dispatch*, November 10, 1945.

sode was his desire to have complete management of the paper. This had revealed itself in many ways. It was manifested by his dominance over Dunlap during his years as city editor; it emerged when he refused second place on the *World* and the elder Pulitzer detected in him a premature, dangerous love of power; it came out again when, brooking no interference, he had Florence McCarthy fired and consolidated all units of the news department under his control; it was evident in his fights with Johns and McAdams over his ambition to control the editorial page. Again this same characteristic motivated his resignation when he failed to get complete control and frustration followed. Bovard undoubtedly had an ambition to be general manager, the position occupied successively early in the century by F. D. White, Frank R. O'Neil, and B. E. Bradley. This position, encompassing administrative authority over the total newspaper operation, seems to have been a necessary one in the days when Joseph Pulitzer, Sr., was an absentee owner and before his son was old enough to assume leadership. After the ascendancy of Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., however, such a post in the hands of another would virtually have left the publisher with little to do or say. Bovard was quoted as saying that since he often had the responsibility of general management during the publisher's absences, he felt he should have the authority, too. It was during their 1936 talks about the *Post-Dispatch's* future that Bovard asked Pulitzer to turn over the paper's management to him. The outcome of this proposal we have in Bovard's words to White. "I was told that I was too radical for editorial control and too contemptuous of business for business office

control. . . .”⁵⁶ In his defense, Bovard argued that what was being called radical thinking was merely letting one’s mind be bold.

We employ it [radical thinking] all day long in this room. The imaginative reporter does it when he refuses to accept the perfunctory police view of the mystery and sets himself to reason out all the possible explanations of the case and then adopts a theory for investigating the most likely one. . . . If it had not been for radical thinking in the news room—influenced, of course, by the realization that one might be wrong—the paper would not now have its proud record of achievement, beat upon beat, over its competitors, and the national reputation which it enjoys for recognizing and developing the significant news of the country.⁵⁷

As to business control, Bovard admitted he was contemptuous of the “contemptible things” that “too many business offices nowadays do,” such as adulteration of the news columns with business office puffery in aid of advertising and “contamination of the news” by “keyhole columnists” in aid of circulation. “I have never thought such practices necessary to an enlightened, vigorously conducted newspaper, even where dividend requirements were more than reasonable.”⁵⁸ However idealistic these views may have been, Bovard failed to convince his chief of their wisdom and practicality, and this failure added to his frustration and general dissatisfaction.

Scarcely two years later, on May 13, 1938, Bovard first indicated to the publisher his desire to resign. It was prompted by a Pulitzer memorandum comparing the first pages of the *Post-Dispatch* with those of the

⁵⁶ Bovard to White, March 24, 1938.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

New York *Times* for a fifteen-day period.⁵⁹ "Forgive me for saying that I have been under the impression recently that our first page has been disappointing and monotonous as to the subject of its turn story," Pulitzer wrote. The *Times* was chosen, Pulitzer stated, because he had always liked its sense of relative news values and not because he wished to make an invidious comparison between it and his own newspaper. The evidence from the analysis, he thought, was justification, in part at least, for a plea that "we strive to give our first page a different appearance from day to day, and in particular, that we do our utmost to avoid placing so great an emphasis on accounts of two wars." Recognizing the great importance of the conflicts, Pulitzer submitted, however, that one day's bombing of Barcelona, with so many killed, read almost precisely like that of the previous day's. Therefore, he suggested that Bovard do his utmost to keep Spain and China on the inside whenever possible, and to find something worth more than a one-column headline for the turn story.⁶⁰ Responding on the same date, Bovard wrote:

Dear J. P.:

Your comparative analysis of Times and P-D first pages prompts, but is not the cause of my resignation, which please accept effective at your convenience.

I reached the decision to step out more than a year ago and there is no longer reason for deferring the action.

You will scarcely be surprised, I think, because you always have been familiar with my views on public questions and newspaper policy, and with my inability to sympathize with much of the paper's general course.

⁵⁹ Joseph Pulitzer, II, to Bovard, May 13, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

These differences eventually became a strain on my sense of propriety. As you know I feel that the paper lacks a philosophy of its own and merely marks time in this stirring period. In this situation my work does not give me the satisfaction I formerly derived from it. I need not go further into details here. . . .

Above all, I want that candor and cordiality which always has marked our relations to continue to the end; I have only the best wishes for yourself and the paper.

Sincerely, O. K. B.⁶¹

Pulitzer sought to persuade Bovard to rescind his resignation; but all efforts failing, it was finally agreed that the managing editor would leave the office one year after the date of the notice. However, the following July, Bovard got back from a Canadian vacation and found on his desk proposals for a curtailment of operating costs because of the adverse economic situation. Part of the plan included reduction of upper bracket salaries and a few dismissals to cut down the payroll. Bovard reacted sharply to the proposal to reduce personnel, fearing it might undermine morale and suggest panic, and instead asked that his own salary be reduced to make up the difference. He raised no objection to salary reductions. However, he telegraphed Pulitzer at Bar Harbor that he wanted his resignation accepted immediately. In the ensuing exchange of telegrams, Pulitzer withdrew the objectionable staff-cutting proposal, but this failed to satisfy Bovard. With reluctance, Pulitzer wrote,

Dear O. K. B.:

With a heart full of sadness I write to accept your resignation. . . .

It will of course be a blow to the staff. . . . My chief hope is that as you so well put it "the candor and cordiality which al-

⁶¹ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, undated memorandum, May 13, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

ways has marked our relations" shall continue to the end; also that the outside world shall not misunderstand, but realize that the ending of the professional and personal relations that have existed between us for so many years has been brought about in a friendly manner with no hard feelings on either side. . . .

I cannot tell you what a wrench this gives me. Perhaps I can express it best by telling you that for many years your name has stood, as it now stands, in my will as a trustee and as guardian . . . of Joe, Jr., [Joseph Pulitzer III] and . . . of Michael, for the stated reason that you were above all others familiar with the traditional principles and policies of the Post-Dispatch and that I could, therefore, rely on you after my death with every confidence in your judgment and integrity.

With profoundest regrets

As ever yours,

JOSEPH PULITZER ⁶²

Bovard then posted his famous notice to the staff, and again, on August 3, reviewed more explicitly in a long letter to the publisher, his reasons for leaving. As already touched upon, these were his lack of accord with current practices the paper was following, such as the increased use of banal entertainment features and syndicated opinion columnists, the use of the news columns by the advertising department, and the paper's wavering editorial course. As a result, he said, the course of the paper had become a strain upon his sense of propriety, and he no longer got the satisfaction out of his work which he used to enjoy. In conclusion, he "freely acquitted" Pulitzer of harmful interference, although as managing editor, he had not been entirely free in conducting his news department; but he was glad to admit that many of J. P.'s criticisms had been helpful.⁶³

⁶² Joseph Pulitzer, II, to Bovard, July 26, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁶³ Bovard to Joseph Pulitzer, II, August 3, 1938, Joseph Pulitzer, II, private correspondence, St. Louis, Missouri.

But these were surface reasons; behind his dissatisfaction lay his inability to do anything about it all—either by securing to himself complete managerial authority, or by committing the *Post-Dispatch* to his program of nationalization, both measures which he honestly and altruistically believed would best serve the *Post-Dispatch*.

After his resignation, O. K. Bovard retired to his ninety-two acre estate near Clayton in St. Louis County. The house was a large, two-story white frame building looking south from the top of an incline, set amid beautifully landscaped gardens, and hidden from the highway. The white graveled drive curved for about one sixteenth of a mile to a covered side entrance. To the west and behind the house, orderly rows of apple trees swept over hill and valley in eye-pleasing waves. Inside, a grand piano graced the drawing room, rows of bookshelves lined the walls. The furnishings and decorations were in the best of taste and provided perfect setting for relaxation and graceful living.

For years the Bovards had lavished much care on this place and found in it a great source of pride and pleasure. Suzanne Bovard's ardent pursuit of civic and cultural activities included work in the St. Louis Garden Club, an organization she had once represented on a Japanese tour. It was she who laid out and planned the sunken rock gardens and fountain pool to the east of the house. Bovard himself found much joy in the

role of country squire. Apple culture, requiring long hours of labor in the out-of-doors, appealed to him, and he heartily tilled, pruned, sprayed, grafted, and personally supervised all work. He could hoist a bushel of apples as heftily as a man many years his junior. The scientific aspects also interested him, and he often discoursed at length on such subjects as soils, varieties, species, fertilizers, or insecticides.

Jack and Suzanne Bovard entertained frequently at Windridge Farm, but the gatherings were small and limited to a few friends. At these Bovard enjoyed the reputation of a delightful and warmhearted host. He shunned the larger social gatherings, and his love of privacy, which had been so marked during his active career, was even more pronounced during his years of retirement. To the outside observer, the couple had everything that human desire could wish with the possible exception of children. An only son had died in infancy leaving them childless. This lack was felt keenly by Bovard especially as he grew older, and was particularly apparent in his many kindnesses to youth. Once S. R. Stanard saw the Bovard Packard cruising along a country road loaded with Boy Scouts on an outing. At the wheel and having as much fun as any of the others was the esteemed managing editor. But when Stanard, one of the *Post-Dispatch* editors, met his chief with Mrs. Bovard attending the Veiled Prophet's Ball, the biggest affair on the city's social calendar, and queried, "Having a good time, Boss?" Bovard snapped, "I am *not*!"

He did not give up his hunting expeditions. Although he was usually alone on his excursions to Murray Lake, North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Carlo Krause,

Ben Williams, and Daniel Fitzpatrick frequently accompanied him to other hunting grounds. An earlier companion was McAdams, infrequently Joseph Pulitzer was a member of the party, and sometimes Roy Stockton, Dwight Perrin, and Don Thompson. Quail and geese attracted them to Matagorda Island, off the Texas Gulf Coast near Corpus Christi, where they crossed on Pulitzer's excursion boat, the *Japonica*. Peoria, Illinois, the White River Bottoms near Stuttgart, Arkansas, and Cuba, Missouri, were also favorite shooting spots. Nearer home, Bovard was for many years a member of the Cuivre Island Club, organized by McAdams, and he was later a frequent guest at the McAdams lodge on *Marais Temps Clair*, or "Fair Weather Marsh," a natural habitat of multitudinous varieties of wildlife.

Bovard's extensive Canadian jaunts brought in cock pheasant, quail, jacksnipe, and teal, the smallest and fastest of the waterfowl. To the practiced observer, his quick eye and gun arm were well worth watching.

This mode of life was not interrupted by public appearances. He declined opportunities to speak and write about the press. Just after his resignation an invitation came from Frank Perrin, an editor of *Christian Science Monitor*, to which Bovard replied from London that, at this time at least, to write his views on the press would do no good. "It is the owners and not the newspapermen who need to realize the world in which they are living, and I fear no article of mine would have much influence on them."⁶⁴ He rejected an invitation

⁶⁴ *Id.* to Frank Perrin, undated letter (September, 1938), Dwight Perrin Papers, in the possession of Mrs. Perrin, Tucson, Arizona. This correspondence is not now available to scholars.

from Dean Frank Martin of the University of Missouri School of Journalism to lecture at the school. Lifetime habits of seclusion seemed to prevail even after he could no longer attribute them to the desire to avoid pressures tending to bias news judgment. He continued to shun places where public adulation might have been his, and to shun opportunities to serve the profession.⁶⁵ He refused offers of honorary degrees. He had not earned a degree, and he was not the man to place much value upon such evidences of esteem. Though he had been extremely proud to see his reporters and the paper receive acclaim, he scorned honors that would have been his, had he been willing to receive them.⁶⁶

His one recorded public appearance after retirement was noteworthy. It was on the occasion of his visit to Washington in 1939, when, for the first time since he founded it, he saw the inside of the Washington Bureau of the *Post-Dispatch*. One evening after the annual Gridiron Club dinner, a large group gathered in the Mayflower Hotel apartment of Eugene Meyer, publisher of the *Washington Post*. A roomful of newspaper correspondents and public officials enjoyed a good-natured forensic battle between Bovard and Justice Felix Frankfurter of the United State Supreme Court. The distinguished editor, who prided himself upon his knowledge of constitutional law, in an exchange of banter, told the Supreme Court Justice how he thought the highest court of the land ought to be run; in return, Frankfurter expressed his views of how a good news-

⁶⁵ *Id.* to Miss Vita Friend, August 9, 1938, O. K. Bovard Papers, St. Louis, Missouri, in which the editor refused an invitation to speak on the press.

⁶⁶ *Editor and Publisher*, LXXVIII (November 10, 1945), No. 46, p. 64.

paper should be conducted.⁶⁷ On a second trip to the capital, he offered his opinion of the Associated Press antimonopoly suit to the Department of Justice. Like most other newspapermen, he thought the suit unwise because, if successful, it would make the Associated Press available to all newspapers, thus increasing, instead of minimizing its monopolistic tendencies.⁶⁸

Before Bovard returned from Europe, where he went immediately after leaving the paper, offers of other editorial positions began to reach him. Robert McLean of the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* cabled him, urging a stop over in Philadelphia on his way back. Bovard did, spending five or six days there, and at McLean's request, made a study of the city papers. McLean told Bovard he was thinking of making an offer to buy the Philadelphia *Record*, and wondered whether in case his plans materialized, Bovard would be interested in assuming the editorship. Bovard said he would be interested only if complete and final editorial authority would be vested solely in him. He had reached an age in life and a stage in his career, he felt, where he could be effective only in these circumstances. McLean could not agree to this, he said, as long as final responsibility rested with the owners, but he asked the St. Louis editor to consider the matter until he negotiated for the *Record*. McLean did not buy the *Record*, and nothing came of the discussions,⁶⁹ except that McLean employed Dwight Perrin, Bovard's assistant, as managing editor of his *Evening Bulletin*.

A short time later Ralph Ingersoll was planning a

⁶⁷ Dilliard, "Mr. Bovard," *loc. cit.*; Felix Frankfurter to the author, December 16, 1949; Eugene Meyer to *id.*, December 21, 1951.

⁶⁸ Brandt to *id.*, November 16, 1951; Thurman Arnold to *id.*, December 11, 1951.

⁶⁹ Robert McLean to *id.*, November 26, 1951.

liberal, crusading, nonadvertising newspaper for the New York field—the paper he eventually started in 1940 as *PM*. When *PM* was no more than a prospectus, Ingersoll visited Bovard at Windridge Farm to offer him the editorship, “with no strings.” Bovard was tempted and seemed excited over the possibilities. Ingersoll stayed overnight while discussions continued; but Bovard declined the offer, saying he did not want to work for anyone again. He could visualize “strings,” or perhaps he did not think favorably of the *PM* project. But Ingersoll thought he saw another reason—“My opinion was that he had really decided that his active life was over—unconsciously if not consciously—or I could have persuaded him. Because I thought so highly of his stability and integrity I was prepared to make him the editorial boss. I was very disappointed but was so certain that he was psychologically through with active struggle that I did not try again.”⁷⁰ Rumors of other offers, some fabulous, persisted. One which seemed to have some foundation related to a proposition from George Backer of the New York *Post*.

The end came sooner than anyone suspected. In the fall of 1944 Bovard contracted a bronchial infection while on his customary Canadian hunting trip. When he returned to St. Louis, he was in a critical condition. His fever stubbornly resisted treatment, and the nature of his illness puzzled the doctors. Three months in Barnes Hospital were followed by slow recuperation at home. Though he had not fully regained his strength, he could not resist the call of the Saskatchewan woods when autumn again rolled around. That expedition took

⁷⁰ Ralph Ingersoll to *id.*, February 7, 1952.

his remaining strength. When Mrs. Bovard met him at the airport his face was flushed, and at the hospital his illness was diagnosed as virus pneumonia. Death came near midnight on Saturday, November 3, 1945. His obituary made the Sunday paper's deadline.⁷¹ On November 6 more than three hundred persons attended the funeral. Neither active nor honorary pallbearers were named; instead, his *Post-Dispatch* colleagues headed by Joseph Pulitzer filled a reserved section and after the service formed a double line as a guard of honor flanking the casket. Bishop William Scarlett of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese, a personal friend of Bovard, read the service, which in the church's tradition, made no personal mention. Burial was in Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis.

Many eulogies of Bovard appeared in the press and in letters to Mrs. Bovard. Some of the thoughts expressed were echoes of those voiced at the time of his retirement. In a penetrating assessment of the editor's career Marquis Childs in the *Post-Dispatch* of November 10 called him a "Surgeon of Facts," a man who imparted character and integrity to the newspaper, making it a power for good. Using a scalpel rather than a bludgeon, he cut beneath the surface shams and disguises to the truth that lay beneath.

Before an appraisal of Bovard's professional contributions or his place in history is attempted, it is necessary to emphasize the distinction that has been drawn

⁷¹ *Post-Dispatch*, November 3, 1945.

between two periods of his long tenure. It appears that his claim to greatness would rest upon the achievements of his earlier and longer period of editorship, which far overshadows the final few years. Dilliard said it was the earlier editor whose memoranda were models of clarity, and who did the planning so that reporters could execute the tactics. "He was the editor who could celebrate a brilliant achievement with one breath and condemn slovenliness with the next . . . the editor who sought to make the newspaper he served into a 'people's university.'" In essence, this was the man who showed such promising genius as city editor and who attained his greatest stature as managing editor. During this period he brought to journalism the devotion of a dedicated life. First of all, he was a master craftsman because of his professional skill, his news sense, and his truth-seeking quality. Second, he was probably best as general of a news campaign, and in this attainment he was, and perhaps still is, unequaled. Personal characteristics which gained him the reputation he had in these two categories of accomplishment were his great courage, unflagging persistence, coolness of judgment, and powers of decision, his ability to delegate authority, to train and discipline effectively, to set high standards of performance, and yet to earn the loyalty and respect of his men. He had intellectual integrity and honesty, good taste, and a keen, searching, restless mind that was never satisfied with things as they were. Childs gave us the essence of Bovard and the things Bovard stood for when he called him a "monolith of character." For it was because he insisted upon standards of character and integrity

that he elevated the professional level of the practice of daily journalism.

In a sense the strengths of this earlier period seem to have developed into the weaknesses of the last years. Prominent among these was his love of power, which, kept in restraint, was a driving ambition, but out of hand, caused friction and finally contributed to his gradual frustration. Closely related to this was an egoism, which in the earlier years made him a self-assured, commanding figure. Carried to extremes, it brought a certain rigidity, a dogmatism that blinded him to the possibility of error in his own thinking and made him see the world from an arbitrary perspective. As to his eventual clash with Pulitzer over the future course of the paper, later events—the second World War and the subsequent division of the globe between peoples of opposing ideologies—seem to show that Pulitzer's stand was wiser, that it would have been a mistake to make the *Post-Dispatch* an advocate of nationalization. However similar in direction to, though not in agreement with, the second Roosevelt administration Bovard's program may have been, a few short years later it was out of step with the prevailing forces of public opinion. Whether Bovard's program for the country was in the long run wise or prophetic is a question that must remain largely unanswered for the present.

The greatest political problem facing Americans at the mid-century, it seems, may be whether democracy and social planning can be successfully reconciled and integrated. Technological changes, increases in population, and many other factors cause an apparently inevitable trend toward centralization. This trend seems

to require some degree of planning; to accomplish it, centralized government and its complement, bureaucracy, become indispensable. The question is still to be answered: can political freedom and other individual values be protected and preserved when any group in society exercises power which greatly interferes with individual rights? Bovard, surely, was grasping at the ramifications of this same problem, but in his day it was unrestricted private enterprise, and not government, which seemed to threaten personal freedoms and to narrow individual opportunities.

The editor's view of man's problems, political and economic, considered in relation to the span of his career, appears to be rather restricted and fragmentary. One can point to certain blind spots and inconsistencies. For instance, to attribute unemployment to the evolution of the machine was an oversimplification. Although he wanted to take steps to preserve individual freedoms, he seems to have lost sight of, or never to have realized, the potential threats to personal values inherent in such plans. It is difficult to see how he could bring himself to believe that government could administer a group of nationalized industries any more justly or more for the general good than private business. Bovard, more than most men, was indeed fully aware of the failure, the political shilly-shallying, and the corruptness operating in the function of political institutions. He probably could not have foreseen the taxes, the bureaucracy, and other burdens of big government. Moreover, his logic suggests a dogmatism which not only characterized his thinking but also narrowed the effectiveness of his arguments.

Bovard's plan must be considered in its setting: the early depression years and the upheavals of that tempestuous era, the grim domestic outlook and the growing international complications. Against this background lay his great desire to guide public opinion and to find a course of leadership for the paper he served. His visits to Russia and Sweden, the influence on his thinking of English friends among the Fabians, his own aversion to injustice and his passion for reform were among the chief factors which caused him to advance his plan. It was, he felt, a compromise between socialism and democracy which combined the best features of the two and provided a sound solution to the ills besetting mankind.

Segments of the American press are still subject to most of the same weaknesses that Bovard so ardently fought: commercialism, banality, innocuousness, excessive use of trivia, failure to provide leadership, oversensitivity to criticism and to various pressures, and lack of fairness in news presentation. These are shortcomings the profession works hard to diminish. Most American newspapers try, with varying degrees of success, to overcome such tendencies. The newspaper to which Bovard devoted his life, has succeeded phenomenally in this respect.

The vast accomplishments of the *Post-Dispatch* during the earlier Bovard period, besides indicating his journalistic triumphs, provide measurable evidence of the editor's influence upon his community, state, and nation. Anderson said that for a quarter of a century Bovard exerted as much influence on the lives of St. Louisans as any other individual. Brandt said that the

editor helped make St. Louis and Missouri better places in which to live and that he personally believed Bovard, more than any other managing editor he knew, had made the federal government a "cleaner, more progressive government."

As for the *Post-Dispatch* itself, Bovard's impact is still felt. Fourteen years after his retirement and nine years after his death, his tradition is alive there. Succeeding managing editors who grew up under Bovard tend to pattern their conduct after the aloofness and inapproachableness, which in him was relieved by a certain heroic appeal that continues to arrest the imagination.

The fact that since his retirement the *Post-Dispatch* has continued its unbroken record of great journalism does not diminish Bovard's contribution to that success. The paper has lost none of its crusading vitality. The smoke abatement campaign, the investigations following the Centralia mine disaster, the discovery of newspapermen on the Illinois state payroll, and the recent disclosures of internal revenue corruption are indications of continued zeal that, year after year, rank it among America's foremost newspapers.

The vision, daring, and skill in news development that first gained the paper this national standing were largely Bovard's. Although Joseph Pulitzer II merits considerable credit for the *Post-Dispatch's* brilliant record, appraisal of his ultimate relative position must be delayed for the future. Johns's overall contribution was sizable, but during the period of Bovard's and the paper's ascendancy, Johns's star was setting. Considering the contributions of every *Post-Dispatch* executive for

the period 1911 to 1938, we must recognize Bovard as the greatest single personal force in the management. He had no superiors on the paper, and few, if any, equals. He was the best newspaperman that the *Post-Dispatch* had produced.

When we accept the position of the *Post-Dispatch* as one of the great newspapers of the United States and acknowledge Bovard's contribution to that success, his place in American journalism is clear. He belongs among the great editors of his day.

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